

1-1-2001

John Smith: A charismatic and transformational religious leader

Philip B. Muston
Edith Cowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Muston, P. B. (2001). *John Smith: A charismatic and transformational religious leader*.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1041>

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1041>

Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.
- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author's moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).
- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

JOHN SMITH

A CHARISMATIC AND TRANSFORMATIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADER

Philip B. Muston

**Bachelor of Arts (University of Melbourne)
Diploma of Theology (Nottingham University)**

**School of International, Cultural and Community Studies
Edith Cowan University**

Date of Submission: December 13, 2001

ABSTRACT

JOHN SMITH: A CHARISMATIC AND TRANSFORMATIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADER

John Smith is best known as the charismatic leader and president of God's Squad Motorcycle Club, which seeks to proclaim and incarnate the Christian gospel in Australian outlaw motorcycle subculture. Smith is in fact an evangelist and public figure in his own right. As well he is a teacher and social commentator whose prophetic statements and interpretation of events had an impact in his own culture and abroad. He is also a media spokesman and unofficial 'priest' for thousands who feel themselves alienated from institutional expressions of Christianity, and the pioneering founder of alternative church congregations.

This biographical and theoretical study focuses on the transformational nature of Smith's charisma: his vision of the gospel as a radical and morally transforming influence, and his drive to see God's Kingdom brought to bear on earth as in heaven. It addresses the nature of the gifts that have enabled this maverick religious leader to influence the lives of many in one of the most secular cultures in the world, and to win the admiration of more orthodox church leaders who would like to have been able to bridge sub-cultures as Smith has done. It questions how his charismatic gifts function, and to what end. The study also demonstrates how Smith's gifts and character have both enabled and impeded him in the process of applying his vision.

Drawing on interviews with Smith and those who have known and worked with him, as well as on Smith's own writings, talks and broadcasts, his life and career are examined in the light of current theories pertaining to charismatic and transformational leadership. In addition the significance of his life as a leader, pioneer and minister is assessed.

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief: (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks to John Smith, without whose co-operation this study would not have been possible, and to those of his family, friends, colleagues and present and past associates who allowed themselves to be interviewed.

Thanks and gratitude also to my Supervisor, Dr Anne Harris, for her guidance, help and encouragement in shaping the thesis and bringing it to completion. For his suggestions and guidance in the chapter on Smith's early life, thanks to Dr Bill Leadbeater.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract..[ii]

Declaration..[iii]

Acknowledgments [iv]

Acronyms used [vi]

Timeline [vii]

Introduction p1

***Chapter 1* Charismatic and Transformational Leadership p7**

***Chapter 2* The Early Life of John Smith p23**

***Chapter 3* From Conservative to Radical p49**

***Chapter 4* The Arrival of a Movement p62**

***Chapter 5* Cultural and Theological Factors behind the
Charisma p72**

***Chapter 6* God's Biker: Smith Becomes a Public Figure p94**

***Chapter 7* Truth and Liberation Concern: Building an
Alternative Church p111**

***Chapter 8* Routinising the vision through the establishment
of Care and Communication Concern...p133**

Conclusion p145

References p152

***Appendix* Australian Spirituality**

ACRONYMS USED

TLC	Truth and Liberation Concern
CCC	Care and Communication Concern
CFC	Campaigners for Christ
HOG	Harley Owners Group
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
MBI	Melbourne Bible Institute
QIT	Queensland Institute of Technology

TIMELINE

1942: John Smith born, April 7. First home at Preston, Victoria.

1945: Second World War ends.

1947: Smith suffers serious burns in an accident at home.

1951: Smith family moves from Melbourne to Raywood, northern Victoria.

1952: Smith contracts rheumatic fever. Hospitalised until October 1954.

1956: Smith family moves to Trafalgar, Gippsland, Victoria.

1959: Billy Graham holds first Australian 'Crusade'. Basketball player Bill Dunlap visits Warragul High School.

1960: Smith family moves to Chinchilla, Qld.

1961: Smith begins studies at QIT for career in secondary teaching. Enters period of 'closet' atheism and begins affair with fellow student.

1962: Smith's final 'conversion' experience under the ministry of George Francis at Q.I.T. Ends affair with fellow student.

1963: Smith experiences being 'filled with the Holy Spirit', followed by first prophecy about being an "apostle to the Gentiles". Smith's mother dies. Family moves to Childers, Qld. Smith meets Glenna Walker.

1964: The Beatles tour Australia in June, marking a watershed in youth culture and the start of the youth revolution in Australia.

1965: The Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan tour Australia for the first time. Military conscription re-introduced in Australia to boost military for engagement in Vietnam war.

1965: Smith travels to Melbourne to begin three year Diploma in Theology course at Melbourne Bible Institute.

1967: The Beatles release *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The 'Summer of Love' takes place in San Francisco, marking the zenith of the 'hippy' movement in western youth culture.

1968: Paris student riots. Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinated. Smith marries Glena Walker, graduates from MBI and accepts part-time pastoral ministry at Glen Forbes Methodist Circuit, Gippsland, along with part-time position teaching history at Wonthaggi High School.

1969: Woodstock Festival takes place in New York State. Smith's first child, Paul, is born.

1970: Smith begins work as professional evangelist with Campaigners for Christ in Melbourne. In late 1970, Smith leads evangelistic 'crusade' in Mt Isa, then experiences second prophecy about being an "apostle to the Gentiles". Begins self-education in secular arts and literature.

1971: Kathy Smith is born. Late in the year Smith launches the Christian Motorcycle Association with Eddie Pye.

1972, January: First edition of "Truth and Liberation" newspaper published. Smith attends first Sunbury Festival, held in Sunbury, Victoria. Smith dismissed from CFC.

1972, March: Truth and Liberation Concern begins as a parachurch organisation based at the Smiths' Boronia home.

1972, March-June: Smith buys his first motorcycle. Victorian chapter of God's Squad formed. Public launching of God's Squad Victorian chapter featured on Channel 9's *A Current Affair*.

1972, December: Election of Federal Labor Government under leadership of Gough Whitlam.

1973: Smith visits the United States to meet Jesus Movement leaders. Lyndal Smith born.

1974-1980: Truth and Liberation grows to major independent church in Bayswater, Victoria. Mud-brick facility built.

1975, November: Dismissal of Whitlam Labour Government, followed by election of Coalition Government under leadership of Malcolm Fraser.

1978: Jonestown massacre: 913 suicide in northern Guyana.

1982: Smith spends most of the year in Adelaide doing evangelism and pioneering Values for Life seminars.

1982, November: Smith resigns from Truth and Liberation Concern.

1984: Smith founds Care and Community Concern and St Martin's Community Church in Carlton.

1985: Smith speaks for the first time at Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival in United Kingdom.

1987: Smith's autobiography *On the Side of the Angels* is published in Australia and the United Kingdom.

1988: Publication of *Advance Australia Where?* in Australia.

1992: Publication of *Cutting Edge* in Australia and United Kingdom.

1996: Smith travels to Asbury Seminary, Kentucky, United States, to begin D.Min. Studies.

1997: UK chapter of God's Squad launched.

2001: Smith returns to Australia.

INTRODUCTION

In 1973, while an undergraduate at Melbourne University, I went to a lunchtime meeting to hear an American speaker, Professor Jack Sparks, of the Christian World Liberation Front, based in Berkeley, California. This former mathematics teacher was a clever apologist for evangelical Christianity, and a world leader in what had become known as the Jesus Movement. I remember little about him, other than that he dealt calmly with hecklers and had a reasoned answer for each question put to him. The person who made a much more vivid impression on me was Professor Sparks' host and 'minder' that day, whom I recognised as John Smith. Smith had recently formed God's Squad, a group of Christian bikers, and been featured on Channel Nine's *A Current Affair*. As he introduced Sparks, I noticed that Smith had a remarkable vitality about him. The leather 'outlaw' biker gear was impressive, as was the long, jet-black beard and hair. He looked appropriately radical for that period of anti-Vietnam protests and left-wing idealism. However the vitality was more in his eyes, which were dark and penetrating; in his movements, which were verging on the hyperactive; and in his voice, which carried unusual authority. Who was this man and where had he come from, I remember wondering? He must have been about the age Jesus of Nazareth was when he started his ministry around the dusty towns of Galilee. Certainly he had the kind of dynamic energy and unschooled confidence about him which I imagined Jesus had. The word which was coming into vogue for the impact of such qualities in the early 1970s was 'charisma'.

I was not affected by Smith's charisma enough to throw in my lot with him then, though many did, and in fact I did not see him again for another three years. When a friend took me to hear Smith speak at the Truth and Liberation Concern in Bayswater, Victoria, once again I was impressed by his authority and even more by the fact that he could keep an audience engrossed for a ninety minute bible study. Why couldn't I do this with the church youth group I led, I wondered in my naivety? Over the next twenty-five years in my own career as a journalist and then an Anglican minister, I came into contact with Smith from time to time. As a radio producer at 3XY in Melbourne I realised he was what was known in broadcasting as 'talent', and we featured him regularly on air. In 1990 he stayed with my family in Darwin when he missed a connection en route to the Kimberley. Together we did some street ministry and sat up late talking. As Smith conversed readily and frankly, I glimpsed chinks of insecurity in his impressive armour. They were as fascinating as the strengths of this complex man, and prompted reflection on the nature of his gifts. Thus my choice of him as a subject for a thesis is based on many years of observing Smith with interest.

The nature of this thesis is both **biographical** and **theoretical**. At the biographical level it focuses on the life and ministry of John Smith, who is best known as the president of God's Squad Motor Cycle Club, but who during thirty years has had a long and influential ministry in Australia and overseas as a Christian evangelist and apologist to the post World War Two 'baby boom' generation. I trace the factors in John Smith's personality, family life and upbringing which helped to make him the figure he is. I consider a childhood characterised by considerable trauma and isolation; his early adulthood as a conservative Christian fundamentalist; and the liminal experience which played a part in his change to being a radical and countercultural Christian leader. I examine his development as an effective public orator and preacher; his rise to prominence as a leader of the Jesus Movement in Australia in the 1970s; his achievement as a pioneer in the establishment of a non-denominational countercultural church in Melbourne; the growth of his media profile; and his work during nearly thirty years with the outlaw motor cycle subculture.

At the same time there is a theoretical interest in understanding the kind of authority that John Smith so obviously exercised. If it was charismatic by any rigorous definition of the term, how did it function and what were its origins? The nature of charismatic leadership is studied, despite it being a field of research which is relatively new and still loosely developed. John Smith appears to fit the picture of a certain kind of charismatic leader, known in the literature as 'transformational'. My theoretical framework examines the nature of transformational leadership and how Smith's life and work conformed to its pattern. I also examine and analyse biographical material relevant to Smith's charismatic and transformational leadership.

Content and Methodology

This thesis begins with a chapter outlining the major contributions to an understanding of charismatic leadership. It starts by considering Weber's work a century ago, and examines how his use of the word 'charismatic' has been taken up, studied and developed in the last fifty years. The category of transformational leadership which began with Burns (1978) is also examined. Chapter 2 traces the early life of John Smith, with its unusual, traumatic and often isolating circumstances. Chapter 3 looks at Smith's conversion from conservative to radical, with his dramatic transformation from fundamentalist reactionary to 'hippy' protester. Chapter 4 charts his rise within the Australian manifestation of the worldwide Jesus Movement. Chapter 5 focuses on the development of Smith's intellectual and theological understanding, examining the evolution of the uniquely Australian expression of Christianity with which Smith is identified. Chapter 6 tells the story of Smith's involvement with the 'outlaw' bikers, the growth of the God's Squad Motorcycle Club ministry for which Smith is best known to

the public, and the expansion of his media profile. Finally, Chapter 7 outlines the pioneering of 'alternative' church organisations, the work which caused Smith most trouble and frustration, and which became in many ways the greatest test of his leadership abilities.

John Smith's own words are utilised in this study. These include: his published works; recordings from broadcast interviews with Smith and of some of his public addresses from the period 1972-1997; and articles from various journals from the same period. Other literature documenting Christianity in Australia during the latter part of the twentieth century is also used. In addition, over a period three years, I conducted a series of recorded interviews with Smith himself. The longest one was conducted face to face in Perth, in January, 1998. Others were recorded with Smith's permission over the telephone from Melbourne and from Kentucky, where Smith was resident for most of the research period. Altogether I spent in excess of 12 hours talking with Smith, who was cooperative in the process. On several occasions, upon request, he e-mailed me copies of documents and letters, in some cases quite substantial in length. Other people also agreed to be interviewed by telephone, among them Smith's wife, Glena; his father, Ken Smith, from Queensland; a lifelong friend and colleague, John U'Ren; and some of Smith's present and former followers, including Bruce Chambers, Eddie Pye, and Vic Heyward. I also spoke with two of Smith's opponents in the breakup of Truth and Liberation Concern, Mike Peele and Morris Stuart.

Throughout the last decade a significant amount of research has been completed looking at the subjective relationship between researcher and subject. It is acknowledged that a personal connection often provides one of the reasons for taking up a particular study to begin with. "At some level, the sociologist must identify - either positively or negatively - with [his]/her object of investigation" (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991: 40). See also Melucci (1996: 2). As stated already, I have had a casual working and personal relationship with Smith in some instances. I am attracted by his vitality and fascinated by his insights and self-taught knowledgeability. To some degree I have been subject to his charisma, though never enough to join his churches, to be tempted on to a motorcycle, or I trust to lose my ability to critically evaluate his strengths and weaknesses as a colleague in Christian ministry.

Biography and Leadership Theory

For thirty years John Smith has been in many respects a charismatic and transformational leader. As the focus shifts back to the role of individual charismatic leaders in the theory of social and religious movements (Touraine, 1984), it is important to take into account biographical factors in his development as a leader, as well as to study the movement he led in its various facets. Why did he become the leader of an alternative movement rather

than, say, a lawyer or a teacher or a denominational minister of religion? What was the nature of the movement in which he was a leader, and why did it attribute to him charismatic and transformational powers? These questions will be addressed in the thesis.

James Jasper, in his influential research on leaders of moral protest (1997:54-68; 210-228), stresses the importance of biography in understanding leading protesters. He draws attention to the "artfulness", oratory and charisma of leaders, interactive with the biographical journeys of the followers, as significant elements in the growth of movements (1997: 54-68). He points to what he calls the "kookiness" of many protesters, which he attributes to their alternative lifestyles, hoping the term "capture(s) the fluidity, expansiveness, and creativity of protest" (1997: 225). Biography of moral protest leaders is important, Jasper believes, in that it "might allow us to see many sources and activities of protest that are not organised by formal groups and leaders, as well as the cultural and biographical materials out of which new organizations arise" (1997: 216). He admits that individual people, with their foibles and imperfections, are troublesome for social science. However "if each movement is composed of individuals with varying biographies, drives and goals, and if each individual has many motivations, some of them hidden even to herself [sic], what can we say about the roots of protest" (Jasper, 1997: 216)? Social scientists often downplay or oversimplify individuals' internal processes, trying to exclude the complexity of individual variations, or assume them to be "random noise in the system" (Jasper 1997: 216). Yet a good social observer needs to examine individuals for motivations, symbols and strategies.

Most protesters are compelled by a combination of motivations, compulsions and desires, some of them conscious, and others not. Simple models of human motivation, whether rationalist or crowd-based, miss the lion's share of reality. So do theories that look for the motivations of entire...movements rather than those of the individuals that compose them. The biographical dimension of protest cries out for exploration (Jasper, 1997: 214).

In this study the complexity of John Smith's personality is obvious, as are the combinations of motivations and compulsions active in his life and work. Events and circumstances of his childhood and youth, together with the nature of his personality, helped him become not just a practitioner of moral protest, but a transformational leader of people. His drive to be compassionate, for example, has influenced to some extent the whole nature of the movement he led, and the nature of its protest against secular Australian life. If John Smith in his biker gear and with his hairy visage seems somewhat 'kooky' to some, then this can be mostly attributed to his chosen alternative lifestyle and desire to identify with groups other than the mainstream.

In some ways John Smith represents the kind of leader celebrated by Allan Touraine in his book *The Return of the Actor* (1984). With grand narratives and the historical certitudes of the original sociologists gone, social movements are once again seen as viable ways for people to gain purpose and hope and a better future for their 'tribal' group. In times of diversity and change various social movements emerge, where the group leader and the actor are crucially important in enabling the creative freedom and action necessary to bring new forms out of general decomposition and crisis. During the last three decades of the twentieth century the mainstream Christian churches in Australia were mostly in decline, the Christian consensus in society was disintegrating quickly, and denominational church leaders were received with increasing scepticism and decreasing authority. It was leaders and 'actors' such as Smith who accessed the media and inspired new forms of church, thus showing a way forward for the 'tribe' of baby-boom Australians who were determined to live according to the values of a revitalised Christianity.

In taking a partly biographical approach, I make no claims to be telling the complete and exhaustive story of John Smith's life. It is impossible to report or include every action or event that was significant in the life and ministry of this man, especially in a work of this restricted length. I have chosen to include those events, relationships and activities that my research uncovered, and that I consider to be most significant. In the words of Marx and McAdam, I am "more like a watercolour painter than a photographer, highlighting certain elements while ignoring others. The final image is very much filtered by the materials and perceptions of the observer" (1994: 19).

Alongside the biographical focus, there is the theoretical examination of Smith's leadership and authority. What are the special qualities that helped him succeed in leadership, and what aspects of his personality and style failed him in leadership at various times? Also, to what degree did Smith's charismatic and transformational gifts help and hinder him in achieving his vision for alternative radical Christian community and mission? Answering these questions entails a study of charismatic leadership generally, with a special focus on the transformational variety of charismatic leadership that motivates people to seek higher moral values and idealistic purpose. John Smith's ability to draw crowds and hold audiences in an age of short attention spans, and his ability to infiltrate such an aggressive and at times anti-social subculture as the outlaw biker scene, often resulted in him being described as charismatic. I argue that Smith's leadership functioned not just in purely charismatic terms, but in transformational terms by appealing to and connecting with the higher ideals and moral values present, if sometimes only subconsciously, in the outlook of his followers. Those influenced by

him are not simply drawn to a charismatic figure, but are inspired to a more “wholistic”¹ (Smith, interview, 2000a) view of the Christian gospel, where faith is worked out in seeking justice and reconciliation in this world as well as personal salvation. Thus, as well as having a biographical element, this thesis examines John Smith’s life and work through the theoretical framework of a study of charismatic and transformational leadership.

¹ The word “wholistic”, as a variation on the more normal ‘holistic’ became a kind of slogan for the Jesus Movement in the 1970s, which did not want to endorse the Eastern religious connotations of the usual spelling.

CHAPTER ONE

Charismatic and Transformational Leadership

The word “charismatic” came into popular usage in the second half of the twentieth century as a means of describing people with a certain intangible quality or attractiveness about them. In its relatively short history of modern usage, the word has become somewhat over-used. Before considering whether John Smith is a genuinely charismatic person or leader it is important to define the term as rigorously as possible, and to review the growing body of literature which focuses on the term. In addition I will examine a particular kind of charismatic leadership that is increasingly described in the literature as “transformational”, for I believe that in many ways this term describes Smith’s vision and style of charismatic leadership.

Charisma

The debate in the literature about charisma has centred around whether it is a result of traits and attributes of the charismatic person, or whether it is the product of a relationship between the leader and his/her followers. The consensus at present is that charisma arises out of followers’ perceptions influenced by the leader’s qualities and conduct. It is also dependent to some extent on situational factors and human needs that are conducive to an interactive and mutually beneficial relationship being established between leader and followers. If there is no human need of leadership, then the gifted person --no matter how poised, self-confident or visionary he or she may be -- is not attributed charisma by the followers.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the work of sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920). Borrowing from theology, he re-introduced the term *charisma* a century ago from the original Greek for ‘gift’ or ‘grace’. Weber described the charismatic person as “set apart...and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers and/or qualities not accessible to the ordinary person” (1964: 358-9). This usually includes a vitality or attractiveness to others: an air of command or strong presence. When people view charismatic gifts as being exemplary, or of divine origin, Weber says, such gifts become the basis of charismatic leadership. “What alone is important,” he writes, “is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority by his[sic] ‘followers’ or ‘disciples’. It is the recognition of those subject to authority which is decisive for the

validity of charisma" (1964: 359). In other words, a leader can only lead charismatically where people have consciously or unconsciously attributed charisma to him or her. The followers are as important, then, in a leader being deemed charismatic, as the leader him/herself. For Weber charismatic leadership is based on the emotional form of community relationship. He says there is no such thing as appointment or dismissal of a charismatic leader, and no career, hierarchy or promotion. Rather, there is simply a call to follow and obey, to mission and duty. The charismatic leader has no salary or benefice, but lives by voluntary gift. More conventional forms of leadership, such as traditional (e.g. inherited or ordained) and rational (e.g. institutional or constitutional) authority, are despised by those party to charismatic leadership. Frequently but not always, a charismatic leader claims fresh or even divine revelation of truth, and this helps form the basis of his/her authority. Charismatic leaders are prophets, in Weber's terminology (1965:46-79), rather than priests, the latter being functionaries who administer and promote established religions or systems.

A charismatic leader's authority may remain throughout life, or be relatively short-lived. Since charismatic power frequently fades with time and cannot be passed on to others, Weber introduced another crucial concept, **routinisation**, to describe the way in which charismatic leaders attempt to establish their non-transferable charismatic power by investing it in an office or structure rather than an individual person (1964: 363-5). Since charismatic authority is an originating phenomenon, it cannot remain stable but must become rationalised or traditionalised or both. Both leader and led have a vested interest in the continuation of the organisation, and accordingly they prefer to see their status put on a stable basis. How is this routinisation to be achieved? In theory, the new incumbent of an office or a structure may be endowed with some of the originator's charisma. Alternatively, new leadership may be chosen by supernatural guidance, by the original charismatic leader him/herself, by heredity, or by charismatically gifted staff. Administrative staff too must eventually be routinised. They cannot be expected to live on inspiration and casual 'love offerings' of money for long. Routinisation therefore involves the appropriation of powers of control and of economic advantages by followers. Typically, they will create positions along priestly or bureaucratic lines. Fiscal organisation must to some extent replace anti-economic character in the movement. This process of routinisation is typically characterised by a degree of conflict, as people adjust to the exercise of more conventional forms of authority (1964: 369-70).

Authorities agree that routinisation is problematical for charismatic leaders. All of the usual approaches to routinisation are by their nature difficult for charismatic types to implement. Charismatic successors or proteges are hard to find, let alone those with identical vision to that of the leader, as Smith discovered. In addition, creating administrative structure is difficult for those who scorn bureaucracy and convention. Being identified with administration is the 'kiss of death' for a charismatic's image of being special and free. To encourage followers to internalise the vision and pursue it independently is hard for leaders used to holding on to power and influence in the interactive charismatic process. Finally, institutionalising the leader's vision into the culture of an organisation requires the leader's changes to be continually successful right up to and through the succession period, which is difficult to ensure.

It will be seen throughout this study that, judging by Weber's original criteria, John Smith has much of the charismatic leader about him. He is perceived as being independent of 'institutional religion': a 'biker priest' who has never been ordained into any denominational expression of church or seen to have any economic incentive for his ministry. He has the powerful voice and carriage, the presence and command of Weber's description. He has story-telling and oratorical ability to hold an audience, together with the assuredness and confidence that what he has to say is infinitely worth hearing. Combined with his exotic 'outlaw' biker appearance, these qualities mean that for many in his audience he is an extraordinary person with an interesting point of view. Some find him compelling enough to want more of him and what he has to offer: personal contact wherever possible, or failing that, involvement through his books, tapes or videos. Of this group, a number become personal followers, attributing to him an irresistible authority in what he says and does. They perceive that he has fascinating and insightful qualities which they themselves do not have and never will have, and a vision which they want to work towards.

There are, however, other criteria for Weber's charismatic leadership that John Smith fails to meet. He has not claimed original revelation from God, and has never had followers attribute supernatural or superhuman powers to him. He has never pretended intimations of prescience - apart from a shrewd knowledge of people and how they are likely to react in different circumstances - or been attributed with extraordinary sexual attractiveness. Certainly he claims little of the Magus for himself: his only mysterious initiatory experiences were of the type commonly experienced as prophecy by many

Christians; he received no wisdom from mysterious sources, secret knowledge or magical techniques.

Smith in fact seems to sit between Weber's concepts of prophet and priest. Like the prophet he exerts power by virtue of his personal gifts, i.e. 'charismatic' authority, rather than through any legally or traditionally recognised office or position. His preaching is vital and emotional, even when embracing intellectual subjects. It includes a strong component of social ethics, and a focus on meaning and purpose in life. Smith is a layman who shies from official attachment to any religious denomination, looking only to his movement's supporters for income. Though he falls short of what for Weber is the "decisive hallmark" (1965: 54) of the prophet in that he proclaims no truth(s) of salvation through personal revelation, he is a prophet of the lesser emissary type in Weber's schema. That is, rather than claiming fresh revelation from divine sources, he speaks a received message (that of the Bible) which he systematises to provide an integrated value system for people relating to the world around them. In some respects he fits the pattern of Weber's religious functionary, the priest, in that he uses his charismatic authority to preach an essentially orthodox Christianity, looking to the Bible and to a lesser degree the Christian Church as the basis of ultimate authority. Smith shows an increasing regard for the importance and value of tradition and ritual process, which he seeks gently to encourage in his movement. All in all, he tends to confound Weber's categories by transcending them: he is to some extent both prophet and priest.

Developments based on Weber's concept

Others have refined Weber's model. Ellwood and Partin (1988: 278-9) defined charisma most succinctly as referring to personal qualities making one striking, fascinating, mysterious, powerful and effective. They say charisma has to do with such things as appearance, voice, presence, poise, intimations of prescience, confidence, assuredness and, perhaps, sexuality. Some people have charisma, others do not. It cannot be learned. Nor can it be claimed for oneself. Rather, others recognise it. If claimed it has to be demonstrated effectively by the possessor and accepted by the followers, who see it as part of their role to recognise and submit to charismatic leadership. John Smith has each of the qualities mentioned to some degree. His confidence and air of command are notable, and accepted by his followers.

House (in Yukl, 1989: 205) believes charismatic leaders are likely to have a strong need for power, and strong convictions about their own beliefs and ideals. Drawing on

Weber's original concept, he developed a set of eight indicators of charismatic leadership, and stressed the role of followers. Followers trust in the correctness of a charismatic leader's beliefs, generally sharing those beliefs. They show unquestioning acceptance of their leader, and indeed affection for him/her. Followers willingly obey a charismatic leader. They have an emotional involvement in the leader's mission, and believe that they are able to contribute to the success of that mission. Consequently they demonstrate heightened performance goals. It will be seen that John Smith's leadership matched each of these eight indicators, although the only context where he normally commands willing obedience of followers is that of his presidency of God's Squad Motorcycle Club, where the club structure and tradition (in Weber's terms traditional authority) support his charismatic authority. Smith claims his ambivalence about exercising power has often kept him from seeking to direct the lives of his followers, but some ex-followers claim he demanded more of their time, energy and loyalty than they could realistically give in the long term.

In 1987 Conger and Kanungo isolated a list of seven behaviours that they believed were responsible for charismatic attribution (in Yukl, 1994: 321). They found that the leader whose vision involves more than incremental change from the status quo is likely to be considered charismatic. That vision however must still be within the bounds of what is acceptable to followers. Secondly, the leader who takes personal risk for his/her cause is more likely to be considered charismatic. Self-sacrifice in terms of status, money or position indicates credibility and trustworthiness. Thirdly, the leader who is prepared to use unconventional strategies is more likely to be considered charismatic, so long as the innovative approaches are seen to be succeeding. A charismatic leader is one, fourthly, whose assessment of the organisation's situation is considered to be an accurate one. Both opportunities and constraints must be seen to be appraised correctly. They found that, fifthly, charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge when crises cause disenchantment with the status quo, and require change. It does not particularly matter whether crises are real or are simply perceived to be real, i.e. are contrived. Sixthly, the charismatic leader is one who manages to communicate self-confidence to followers. He or she keeps any doubts or confusion well-hidden, on the grounds that confidence and enthusiasm are contagious, and any random success will be most likely attributed to a confident leader. As enthusiasm spreads, followers work harder, thereby increasing chances of success. Finally, leaders who exercise personal power and initiative are more likely to be perceived as charismatic than leaders who work by consensus strategy or simply exercise authority without offering an appealing vision. The charismatic

leader goes out on a limb to advocate changes which are unconventional but ultimately successful, or leads out of what is perceived as sheer dedication to his/her people. This may explain why somebody such as Bob Hawke was perceived as charismatic in his days as a dynamic and innovative trade union leader, but gradually lost charismatic attribution (his "love affair with the Australian people") as his prime-ministerial style was seen to be that of a consensus-leader, in contrast to the bolder, "big picture" initiatives and posturing of his successor, Paul Keating.

Assessing John Smith in the light of the work of Conger and Kanungo reinforces his credentials as a charismatic leader. He emerged during the cultural revolution of the early 1970s, in the same year as Whitlam swept to power after decades of conservative rule. His vision, both for Australia and the Christian church, differed from the status quo. He used unconventional strategies for the 1970s, such as a motorcycle club, 'pub' evangelism, and a message contextualised for Australian culture. He took physical, social and financial risks in implementing his vision. He radiated a sense of confidence in his radical interpretation of the Christian gospel as the answer to people's problems, and his followers believed he was right. Furthermore, Smith was prepared to lead through active involvement in most things he undertook, exercising personal power and authority.

'Dark side' of charisma

Conger and Kanungo have more recently reviewed literature on what they call the "dark side" of charismatic leaders (1998: 211f). Charismatic leaders appear to be better at change and innovation than they are at management or administration. Even positive charismatics (i.e. those who are altruistic rather than self-seeking and who on the whole benefit people through their leadership) sometimes exhibit character flaws as a result of the very traits that qualify them for charismatic leadership, such as drive, unconventionality and self-confidence. Such flaws can include poor inter-personal relationships with subordinates, peers and superiors, whose needs they may not fully consider in their visionary fervour. Everybody suffers from narcissism to some extent, but in charismatic leaders self-importance may grow beyond reasonable boundaries to become pathological egotism and self-aggrandisement. There are often negative reactions of offence or antagonism to their impulsive or unconventional behaviour (people's response to them is typically polarised). Poor administrative practices are sometimes a result of autocratic or disorganised management practices as charismatics focus on their visionary 'big picture'. There can be negative consequences when their

self-confidence becomes over-confidence, with charismatic leaders assuming notions of infallibility or inflated self-assessment, and perhaps lapsing into poor judgment about what is reasonable. Sometimes charismatics have trouble through what Conger calls poor "impression management" (in Yukl 1994: 335) in that they don't always give credit where it is due among followers, preferring to take credit themselves for the sake of public image. Charismatics may not even appreciate the need for the assistance of those with more technological and instrumental skills to bring about change effectively. Though Smith can be classed as a positive charismatic, it will be seen that he has not always managed people well and has sometimes reaped negative consequences through impulsive, demanding or over-confident decisions and reactions. At times his negative characteristics have limited or cancelled out the lasting quality of his positive achievements.

Primitive origins

Bryan Wilson (1975) connects the appeal of the charismatic leader with the appeal to primitive needs in people for a 'father' figure to save or rescue them. People associate the leader with qualities such as love, loyalty, ethical concern and so on. The leader can show them what is wrong and what to do. Often he or she will be a warrior leader. Wilson believes that the truly charismatic leader is less and less likely to emerge in western societies where politically more trust is placed in technique and sophistication than virtue and probity. However a hankering for charisma persists in the modern obsession with glamour, and in the appeal to some people of authoritarian cults and fringe groups. For Wilson, one of the forms in which charisma operates today is in the private realm, as opposed to public life, where a congregation will seek to revive memory of a past charismatic movement and leader. A current leader derives charisma by borrowing a patina of the charisma and invoking the memory of the movement's original leader. To be successful, this revival must be uninstitutionalised in a typically charismatic way, with organisation kept hidden, and financed informally by offerings. Prophecy comes to be exercised through forthtelling rather than foretelling (Wilson, 1975: 118). John Smith can be seen as such a figure: seeking to lead a revival of New Testament Christianity, invoking the charismatic memory of Jesus of Nazareth, borrowing something of his appeal through the proclamation of his message in a fresh way, forthtelling the gospel demands for repentance and justice rather foretelling or giving fresh revelation. Wilson would see in Smith an example of derived charisma: a reflection of the genuine charisma whose survival in contemporary society is

questionable. In recent years, with continuing routinisation, Smith has moved progressively away from what Wilson would recognise as charismatic.

Visionary abilities

Lines focuses on the charismatic leader's visionary abilities, noting the charismatic's ability to draw people to a vision and lead them to a new and different place (1992: 324-6). In other words, the charismatic leads people to the 'promised land' as well as conjuring up a vision of it. He or she contributes movement and action towards achieving the vision, gathering in the process loyal and devoted followers. Charismatic visionaries rarely complete their task. Rather, like Moses they lead people toward the promised land but never actually into it. When a charismatic offers a direction, those who follow expect that they will be led into a better life. Lines views people's commitment as based in affective ties parallel to parent-child bonds, formed at deep unconscious levels and therefore having greater impact on an individual than normal social identity influences. For Lines, then, charismatic authority derives from internalisation through which the leader is identified in the unconscious with the idealised parent, the idealised self, or thirdly a symbol of the divine. He calls this process a form of contemporary idolatry, where notions of surrender and submission become dominant themes in the charismatic relationship.

Lines' work raises some interesting questions regarding John Smith. Certainly one perceives in him at times an idealised version of the self: the sort of vibrant and dynamic person that most of us would like to be. In his halcyon days of the 1970s Smith was a role model for many young people of his generation. His continuing appeal to young audiences may indicate that for them he has become, from a distance, an idealised parent figure: he is old enough to be a parent to people in their twenties. Furthermore, it could be that for some he becomes a visible icon of the Jesus he preaches so passionately. I remember a comment a middle-aged woman made about Smith after a two-hour address at a conference on prisons: "His eyes are so bright and alive, so fiery and full of compassion--just like Jesus' eyes must have been" (personal communication to author, Pentridge Prison, Melbourne, 1983). It would be tragically ironic if Smith, in his efforts to preach Jesus as the one and only God-man, was leading people into a form of contemporary idolatry! For those who have difficulty placing trust or confidence in more conventional church figures, Smith has at times been like a Moses figure, seemingly able to lead spiritually restless people across the desert of secular Australia toward a promised land of meaning and purpose.

Collective considerations

Andrain and Apter argue that some charismatic leaders embody the conscience collective of the movement. "Articulating transformative values in a conflict riven environment, charismatic leaders challenge both traditional and bureaucratic authority" (1995: 286). When a society is undergoing turbulent times and people feel the need for drastic change, "a charismatic leader often emerges who embodies a moral example of transformative principles. By identifying with this magnetic leader, followers gain higher self-esteem, empowerment, and solidarity with a collective cause..." (1995: 289). Such leaders fill cognitive, interpersonal and ego-defence needs at times when people are feeling alienated from existing systems. Individuals may fail to understand the meaning or the reason for the crisis, but "skilled at rhetoric, the charismatic sage communicates an ideology that offers explanations for rapid change, interpretations of daily experiences, and priorities for political action" (1995: 291). Furthermore, by embodying shared values the charismatic leader links an individual's personal identity with the collective identity proclaimed by a movement. These leaders also respond to the interpersonal needs for group identity and social solidarity. Young people especially face identity and solidarity crises, along with heightened personal anxieties. Crises, such as the disintegration of authority and confidence reinforce personal stress, and some people long for an effective leader who will solve their problems and take control of their lives. "By challenging traditional values about the need for subordination to established elites, charismatic prophets provide faith in political salvation. By emphasising the need to overcome feelings of personal futility, they strengthen their disciples' self-esteem, dignity and morale" (1995: 292). Negative emotions such as anger, guilt and hostility, originally focused on parents, may be re-directed toward established authorities.

While Andrain and Apter have in mind primarily the political realm and charismatic political leaders, their perceptions can be applied to the religious and socially idealistic charismatic leadership of John Smith. The social revolution of the 1960s in Australia provided a turbulent setting for many people, especially the young, as they experienced increasing alienation from the institutions such as church and state, and began to feel that traditional forms of authority needed replacing. People looked for convincing leaders who might show them an alternative to the status quo. This applied as much in the ecclesiastical realm as in the political. Smith and others like him embodied the shared values of their generation, and offered the opportunity for followers to link their identity with the collective identity of the transformative Jesus Movement. In return for

supporting the movement people gained a mission and a purpose, resulting in increased self-esteem, a sense of personal effectiveness in the midst of change, and hope for the future. By challenging with powerful rhetoric the need for subordination to established religion (even if in practice Smith deferred to denominational leadership), Smith enabled people to dream of a church that was relevant in expression and style to their own generation. In offering the people a vision of Jesus the revolutionary counter-cultural hero/saviour from Nazareth, Smith met in part people's need for a rescuer who would help solve their problems and take control of their lives. He persuaded many young people to redirect negative emotions they felt towards parents and teachers (the 'straights') toward established authorities, and to look to Jesus as the revolutionary who offers an alternative rule of life.

Psychoanalytical explanations

There have been some psychoanalytical explanations of charisma, usually in terms of regression, transference and projection. It is speculated that followers suffering from fear, guilt, or alienation may experience a feeling of empowerment and transcendence by submerging their identity in that of a seemingly superhuman figure (Yukl, 1994: 328). The process may involve: regression to childhood feelings of dependence on parents who seemed to be all-powerful; transference whereby followers see the leader as an idealised self exemplifying their wishes and fantasies; and encouragement by charismatic leaders for followers to project feelings of guilt and hostility on to the movement's common enemies. The depth of followers' identification with the leader in their mission, which is the strength of the charismatic relationship, can cross over into transference where the leader is seen as omnipotent to fulfil followers' needs. Followers may then relinquish healthy scepticism and be vulnerable to abuse from the leader, whether it be verbal, physical or emotional. Conceivably these processes may have been happening to some extent with Smith and his followers. For some of his followers he may have represented an idealised self, taking on the battles they did not themselves dare to engage. Occasionally he can be seen encouraging projection of blame and hostility on to common enemies, such as Malcolm Fraser during the 1970s and early 1980s, or fundamentalism in the 1990s.

An incomplete picture

Despite the various theories, models and criteria discussed here, it is acknowledged that contributions to a theory of leadership in social movements have remained "extremely sketchy" (Melucci, 1996: 332ff). Melucci points out that such research has been

conducted mainly by social psychologists, sociologists and management specialists, whose models have been applied in political sociology. He offers a critique of Weber and notes that it has been very difficult to tie down notions of charismatic leadership. "This charismatic theory of leadership has a number of versions, both psychological and sociological", he writes (1996: 332), behind each of which lies a negative assumption of human nature which ends up rejecting the consideration of leadership as a social relationship. For Melucci the foundation of leadership should be sought "not in the qualities of the leader or in the dependency of his [sic] followers, but in the relationship, the type of relations, that link the actors together" (1996: 333). It is a relationship that must benefit both the led and the leader, and depends on a well balanced exchange of support in return for benefits. A leader needs to devote considerable energy to maintaining this equilibrium. When the leadership is charismatic, the leader interprets the people's needs, then offers a solution by calling on the followers to "convert" to him/her, as he/she points the direction and offers him/herself as the one who knows the way (1996: 336-7). Melucci believes Weber blurred the nature of this relationship by treating one of the parties, the masses, as passive and vulnerable to irrational impulses. He asserts that in fact more recent research has found that, even in the masses, there were relational networks in operation: "universes of 'meaning'" which regulated conduct. A relational theory of leadership "must place charisma alongside other types of resources, therefore accounting both for the role performed by individual qualities and the manifold relationships that tie the leader and her/his followers together" (1996: 337). Melucci sums up the role of leadership as: defining objectives; providing the means for action; maintaining the structure and cohesion of the movement (thereby making communication important); mobilising the support base in support of its goals; and maintaining and reinforcing the identity of the group (1996: 339-341).

John Smith's career has been a gradual discovery of the importance of this relationship between leader and led. At various stages where equilibrium between support and benefits became shaky, Smith tested his followers' patience and devotion. Two obvious examples, both of which will be examined in detail, demonstrate this situation. The first is the discontent which arose in his alternative church Truth and Liberation Concern during the early 1980s. The second more recent example took place when Smith's long stay in the United States for doctoral studies earned the disaffection of much of his support base in Australia. Despite this, Smith always managed to project the vision for his wholistic interpretation of Christianity, and convince enough of his followers that he can take them where they want to go, to retain his authority.

A transformational leader

In many ways the concept of transformational or transforming (the terms are used interchangeably, but 'transformational' has become more common) leadership can be applied to John Smith as an adjunct to the charismatic aspects of his leadership. Burns coined the term 'transforming' for the process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (1978: 20). Transformational leaders seek to raise the consciousness of followers by appealing to (and preferably modelling) higher ideals and moral values: justice, equality, peace rather than fear or greed, for example. They seek, in other words, to activate higher order needs², or our better selves, and to have a positive impact on the lives of the people who follow them. Transformational leadership is moral, but not moralistic (Burns, 1978: 455). It "ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus has a transforming effect on both" (1978:20). Leadership is a process of morality to the degree that leaders engage with followers on the basis of shared motives, values and goals (Burns, 1978: 36). Burns believes the best modern example of such moral, transforming leadership is that of Ghandi.

Transforming leadership can be exercised from almost any position in an organisation, from one of absolute power or one of relative ordinariness, and at either macro or micro level. The essential strategy is to make conscious what lies unconscious among followers. The leader's first task is to bring to consciousness the followers' sense of their needs, values, purposes: indeed, of their true identity. He/she is "to induce people to ... feel their true needs so strongly, to define their values so meaningfully, that they can be loved to purposeful action" (Burns, 1978: 44). Leaders with relevant motives and goals of their own respond to followers' needs and wants in such a way as to meet those motivations and bring changes consonant with those of both leaders and followers, and with the values of both (1978: 41). The transformational leader operates by appealing to need and value levels higher than those of potential followers (although not so much higher as to lose contact). He/she can exploit conflict and tension within people's value structures, for example by arousing dissatisfaction through raising awareness of contradictions in or inconsistencies between values and behaviour. Such dissatisfaction becomes the source of the change that the leader can influence (1978: 42).

² By "higher order needs" Burns meant higher in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954), where the need for self-actualisation is ranked highest over more basic needs such as that for safety, security and physiological survival (in Bass, 1985: 13-17).

Burns describes an **heroic** kind of transforming leadership, where followers believe in leaders because of their personage alone, aside from tested capacities. He cites Moses or Joan of Arc as examples. "Heroic, transcending, transforming leadership excites the previously bored and apathetic; it recreates a political connection with the alienated, it reaches even to the wants and needs of the anomic and shapes their motivation" (1978: 137). Burns believes that **intellectual** leadership is transforming leadership, and that the test of intellectual leadership is one of its transforming power. Does it have the capacity to conceive values and purpose such that ends and means are linked analytically and creatively, and that the implications of certain values for political action and governmental organisation are clarified (1978: 163)? Burns believes the form of transformational leadership requiring the most political skill is that of the **reforming** variety. It requires the ability to deal with endless divisions in the ranks of followers, and the fact that an anti-leadership mentality often characterises reform movements. Reform also requires its leaders to be able to deal with questions of strategy. Leaders must act within moral means to achieve moral ends (1978: 169-70). Transformational leadership of a **revolutionary** type requires a prophet, but needs institutional support and back-up leadership if it is to survive. It cannot afford to tolerate heretics (1978: 239). Transformational leadership is tested by whether there is achievement of significant change that represents the collective pooled interests of leaders and followers (1978: 425-6). The most lasting tangible act of transformational leadership is the creation of an institution that continues to exert moral leadership and foster needed change long after the creative leader is gone. Burns includes social movements in his definition of institutions (1978: 454).

Burns also discusses 'transactional' leadership, where leaders motivate followers by appealing to their self-interest, i.e. political rather than bureaucratic leadership. Smith fits 'transformational' rather than 'transactional': he could offer little in terms of material prosperity to people, and in fact is critical of American-style 'prosperity doctrines', whereby followers are assured that faith will lead to prosperity. Rather, he appeals to people's longing for integrity and justice. Smith exhibits heroic, intellectual, reforming and revolutionary styles of transformational leadership at times, though he sometimes lacked the political skills and institutional support necessary for the latter two styles to succeed. As will be seen, Burns' overall definition of leadership fits Smith's style well: "a stream of evolving interrelationships in which leaders are continuously evoking motivational responses from followers and modifying behaviour as they meet

responsiveness or resistance, in a ceaseless process of follow and counter-flow" (1978: 440).

Bass (1985) defines transformational leadership more broadly in terms of a leader's effect on followers. Followers are motivated to do more than they expected because they feel trust and loyalty to, and admiration for, their leader. A transformational leader, therefore, is one who can arouse in people strong emotion and identification with the organisation or movement (Bass, 1985: 30); increase awareness of the importance and value of a good outcome; and induce followers to transcend self-interest and activate their higher-order ideals and needs (1985: 20). Bass differs from Burns in asserting that it is not important whether the transformational leader's work ultimately benefits followers. Also unlike Burns, Bass believes that charisma is a prerequisite for transformational leadership. However he does not believe charisma is itself sufficient for transformational leadership. Transformational leaders tend to act as mentors, teachers, or coaches, whereas merely charismatic leaders will appear in the role of celebrity, mystic or shaman (Bass, 1985: 52). Celebrities of various descriptions are often charismatic, but on the whole are not transformational (Bass, 1985:31). While John Smith sometimes appeared as an evangelical celebrity because of his charismatic ability and media profile, he was also able to bring people into touch with their higher-order aspirations and ideals. He achieved this with followers through his preaching and through the mentoring and formation processes of God's Squad. With the public he achieved it through broadcasting, through books such as *Advance Australia Where?* (1988) and through addresses at conferences and festivals. When corporations hire him to motivate staff, or business people engage him to address them at professional meetings, they do not want him to inspire them to make more money, but to motivate them in an idealistic or ethical direction. They understand that Smith in his biker's leather may be received as a modern-day John the Baptist figure who is quite likely to confront them morally and challenge them in ways that they would never accept from a professional colleague. Bass identifies three aspects of leadership behaviour that account for transformational leadership: charismatic behaviour, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation (in Yukl, 1989: 224). Smith's ability to inspire people toward individuation (i.e. individualising their identity and personal character through enabling them to feel their highest aspirations), and his ability to interest ordinary people in quite intellectual subjects (e.g. values and philosophies) confirms his status as a transformational leader.

Tichy and Devanna (1986: 60f) believe transformational leaders are those who recognise change and can help people deal with it effectively. They studied a sample of chief executives to identify approaches by which leaders change organisational culture and work toward "revitalisation" (1986: 146). Leaders who challenge current cultural assumptions and implement better monitoring of organisational strengths and weaknesses are likely to be transformational, as are those who have good communication with other organisations, and exercise effective performance measurement and comparison. Once people perceive the need for change, and accept the need for revitalisation, they can be inspired by a vision of a better future, as long as the vision is sufficiently attractive to justify the costs of change. Effective transformational leaders, according to Tichy and Devanna, are visionaries (1986: 122-4). They trust their intuition, see themselves as change agents, and are calculated risk takers.

Transformational leaders are sensitive to people's needs, as well as being disciplined and analytical thinkers who are able to articulate values. They are flexible, learn from their mistakes, and are motivators and mobilisers. John Smith is a risk-taker who trusted his intuition and his vision for decades through the establishment of God's Squad, Truth and Liberation Concern, and Care and Communication Concern. He communicated widely with other leaders in Australia and the United States. For the most part he was able to keep his wholistic gospel vision in front of people, despite instances of apparent insensitivity and difficulties in relating to individuals, as will be seen. The Jesus Movement as a whole was a typical revitalisation movement, and in Australia Smith was one of its transformational leaders.

Vision and change

Bennis and Nanus (1985) found that transformational leaders are able to project a vision that is simple, appealing and credible enough for followers to accept and commit themselves to. It needs to be "right for the times, right for the organisation, and right for the people in it" (1985: 107). Judgement, analytical ability, intuition and creativity are important attributes of the transformational leader in this process. Visions cannot be imposed, but must be communicated to people by persuasion and inspiration, using slogans, symbols, rhetoric, anecdotes and rituals. Followers will not commit to a vision unless they trust the leader. Trust in turn depends on the leader's perceived consistency and expertise. Smith is a brilliant communicator whose presentation makes effective use of symbols, ritual, rhetoric and anecdote. His perceived integrity is as important to his success as his communication skills. He was one of the right people in the right

situation at the right time to be accepted into leadership of the Australian Jesus Movement.

Bennis and Nanus stress that transformational leaders engage in a continual learning process: gathering information about change, putting themselves in situations that will challenge their assumptions, and testing their ideas with both colleagues and outsiders. They tend to create information networks, and see mistakes as learning opportunities. This helps to explain John Smith's incessant thirst for data and knowledge, his life-long drive to self-education and voracious reading, his constant self-questioning, and his need for meeting with small groups of like-minded leaders both in Australia and the United States to work through theory and reflect upon practice. It also explains the extent to which Smith would test his ideas, for example writing sermons in hotel bars and trying them out on patrons to ensure they could be understood by 'ordinary' secular Australians.

Overview

Charismatic leadership, including transformational leadership, is still a sketchy and developing field of study. Weber's concepts and categories of charisma and routinisation have been clarified and expanded by writers who stress aspects such as the special and sometimes dangerous qualities of the leader, the needs and requirements of followers, and the interactive relationship that develops between leader and followers in suitable circumstances. Burns' perception of transformational leadership, promoted and sharpened by Bass, is increasingly regarded as a separate but related field of study. Research has focused on transformational leaders as change agents and visionaries who are able to inspire people in altruistic and idealistic directions. Throughout this study, it becomes clear that Smith is a candidate for inclusion in the category of a charismatic leader of the transformational kind. As the story of Smith's life and ministry unfolds, the traits, influences, motivations and circumstances which developed and fostered his charismatic and transformational gifts are traced.

CHAPTER 2

The early life of John Smith

In writing an account of the early life of John Smith, I begin with a description of the setting of his infancy, and from there follow the chronological path of his development, focusing upon some vital and definitive events and patterns in his upbringing. I note in particular four defining factors in the subject's development as a person and as a Christian: an incident that sparked his awareness of his moral need at the age of five; a traumatic injury that left him scarred and which exacerbated an already difficult relationship with his mother; severe and debilitating illness that led to a long period of social isolation; and the sense of bootlessness and low self-esteem that accompanied John's life as a 'preacher's kid', with its constant mobility and sense of being different from his peers.

I also trace Smith's early intellectual and spiritual development, and in particular the influence of his father's Methodism and the beginnings of John's lifelong Wesleyan orientation. Smith's struggle to gain a faith independent of that of his parents, following a period of unbelief, is considered. In the process I will reflect upon some of the more influential aspects of Smith's story for his later charismatic and transforming leadership.

The northern Melbourne suburb of Preston, built up in the 1920s and 30s, was by the 1940s still regarded as an outer suburb: an artisan-class area with blocks remaining vacant on its north-eastern and north-western fringes. Dominating the atmosphere, both visually and aromatically, were two large tanneries which, besides providing work for many residents during the week, functioned as an illicit adventure playground for the area's boys at weekends. The blocks in Preston were on the whole small, with detached or semi-detached weatherboard and occasionally double-brick bungalows fronting on to narrow streets, on either side of Plenty Road with its tramline to the city. Small backyards typically contained a fruit tree or two and an outdoor toilet backing onto a concrete lane, along which travelled the ice-cart and, twice weekly, the nightsoil collector, known as the 'dunnyman'. Attached to the back of most houses was the 'washhouse', with its wood-fired copper tub.

Preston's several primary schools were crammed-full in the 1940s, as indeed was Preston Technical School, the local secondary school for boys, that had a reputation as one of Melbourne's toughest, producing a significant proportion of the Collingwood football teams of the 1950s and 60s and a school of rock singers such as Normie Rowe and Johnny Chester. Highlights of Preston's entertainment life included the St James and Circle picture theatres, with their family nights on Fridays and their children's western matinees on Saturday afternoons. On both Guy Fawkes and Empire Day evenings huge bonfires would be lit on the vacant blocks, sending thick palls of acrid smoke skyward, with never a thought for the environment. In the 1950s gangs of pubescent 'bodgies' and 'widgies' roamed the streets in baggy jeans and crepe-soled shoes.

It was into Preston, Victoria, that Kevin John Smith (known as John) was born on April 7, 1942, the first child to a devout young Methodist couple, Kenneth and Florence (known as Nancy) Smith. They lived at 44 South St, in the older section of Preston, in a rented weatherboard house with a large date palm in the front yard. Kenneth was an adding-machine mechanic for the Victorian Railways. Nancy stayed home to tend her first-born, who would spend his first nine years as an only child. At the time, his parents were hoping and expecting to go to the Congo as missionaries and did not want to expand their family until they had made the move.

John's earliest memories are of playing with the daughter of a Pentecostal minister who lived nearby, and of being surrounded by people at home: young men and women, often service-men and women awaiting de-mobilisation, who would come to the Smiths for evenings of Christian 'fellowship', which included singing, supper, and often a short talk given by Kenneth in conclusion. "I grew up," says John, "not only with the strictness of non-conformist Christianity, but also with its genuine warmth and humanity" (1987: 11). He understood that his parents seemed to be involved in a mission broader, higher and more important to them than the routine of earning a living and running a home, a factor that no doubt influenced his own transformational vision later on. The Smiths lived near the tramline to the city, where they would travel for holiness meetings. John remembers how cold his bare knees got as they travelled on the open trams to these meetings in winter, but that the misery was compensated for by the "sense of wonder, awe and vicarious delight" he took

from the intensity of emotion these adults experienced as they wept and prayed together for the salvation of the world (Smith, interview, 1998b).

Methodists believed strongly in the social demands of the Christian gospel as well as in piety, so the Smiths took into their home young people who needed shelter, either physical or emotional. They also took part in "Fitzroy Drives", where they picked up homeless people from the streets of Fitzroy, then Melbourne's most rundown suburb, and took them for a meal and a service of worship at the Fitzroy Mission. "Growing up in an atmosphere of care and concern like this ... had the strongest possible influence on me," John has written. "A foundation was laid here for so much of what was to become real to me much later on" (1987: 12). From his earliest memories Smith was conditioned to ethical aspiration and conduct beyond the norm, similar to the transforming values he would activate in others. It may be significant that, apart from these powerful experiences of Christian mission and fellowship, John remembers very little of life in Preston: nothing, for example, of attending the local primary school, Preston South, adding: "I'm not aware of anything negative which would have caused me to repress such memories" (Smith, interview, 1998b).

Ken Smith had recently become a Methodist, having grown up in the Church of Christ. He was a second-generation lay preacher. His father Jack (John Thomas Smith), whom Ken remembers as easy-going and even tempered, had English and Irish ancestors on both sides and married Estella Lavinia Nichols. Jack, a bootmaker and union president during the Depression, ran into strife when he tried to reconcile the union's left and right wings as Federal Secretary. He became a door-to-door salesman and then, at 60, a full-time evangelist with Open Air Campaigners, an organisation that specialised in preaching in factory yards and streets. "My grandad was ... a rugged individualist," writes John Smith. "I saw him in action a number of times. He was a natural stump orator. He'd be heckled from the very start. But this was meat and drink to Grandad, who had a ... sharp-witted way of turning an off-the-cuff comment into a positive point" (1987:13-14). His grandfather's example was to be an abiding inspiration for John, one of whose great gifts is to be able to stand up in a public setting and gather, with only rare exceptions, an audience. "When you're ... scared witless, then you learn ... survival skills very quickly, and that's the method they used with Open Air Campaigners," he states. "You'd just have to get up there in front of a crowd of alcoholic folks or whatever and ... give it a

go. It's the fact that liminality is the best pedagogy" (Smith, address, 1997). Ken, though less of a 'character' than Jack, became a Methodist lay-preacher and was eventually ordained as a Methodist minister.

Nancy did not come from a church family. Her father, Francis (Jack) Drake was Australian-born and fought at Gallipoli and in France in World War I. Her mother, Louise, was born in England. Nancy, who was born in 1921 and had two brothers and a sister, was educated at Preston High School. According to Ken, in her adolescence she was rebellious and drifting toward membership of one of Preston's street gangs, with its experimentation with marijuana. She was also involved, unbeknown to her family, as a junior dancer at the Tivoli Theatre in the city. Invited by the leader of the school's Inter-School-Christian Fellowship to a convention at Upwey, she heard a Baptist preacher, the Rev. John Ridley, preach on John the Baptist's statement 'Behold the Lamb of God!' and was "instantly converted", according to her husband. "She cut clean adrift from her way of life and never hesitated from that day in her Christian discipleship" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998).

Ken considers his marriage to Nancy to have been "wonderful", and can hardly remember a quarrelsome word between them. "She was made for ministry, too," he insists. "She could preach, and was a trained singer. She was good with youth work and women's work" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998). John remembers his mother in less glowing terms as wearing no make-up and dressing very plainly, partly on principle and partly because the family was on a meagre budget. She was "a strong-willed and resolute person of iron convictions who saw things in distinct black and white" (1987: 15).

Indeed Smith experienced a difficult relationship with his mother from quite a young age. He told the ABC's Caroline Jones that Nancy "was a person of profound spirituality ... who found it very hard to express freely affection. There was an ache in me and a longing to be loved and a longing for fellowship with other human beings that seemed to be born from earliest days" (broadcast, 1987). In his autobiography he describes her as a perfectionist, saying that he could never match her standards. He considered her discipline firm to the point of being inflexible and vindictive, and believed she lacked affection toward him. "As a child I reacted to what I saw as unfairness in anger and rebellion," he writes. "I found it very difficult to accept discipline from her: especially the

slaps around the face which she gave when she was angry" (1987: 16). He thinks today that his mother invested in him unrealistic moral ambition.

It was almost as though, while most people take their concept of God from their relationship with their father, my mothering was the divine face for me -- one I felt I could never please. That is what drove me away from her. My feeling was very much one of an only child, with her very much like a Jewish mumma; it was a suffocating thing. She was monstrously over-protective; it was control-freak mothering. On the Sufi Enneagram scale she was an out-of-control Two (Smith, interview, 1998b).

Smith admitted: "There were times when I really hated her, and would nurse my grievances like a child holding on to a teddy bear" (1987: 15). By teenage years his resentment was "smouldering slowly into ... fantasies of her accidental death" (1987: 75). He believed she frightened off his friends from visiting, and made it impossible for him to establish relationships even with church girls because they did not meet her perfectionist standards. As an adult his opinion softened. He came to realise that Nancy's parents had found it difficult to express affection for her, so that she had no parental role model in this regard. He also appreciated that she suffered severe physical pain which may have been caused by the aneurism which killed her at 42. "Only when she was in evangelist-mode did she get in touch with her feelings. I don't have memories of her ever sharing her deeper thoughts or emotions, other than in relation to a world needing to be saved" (Smith, interview, 1998b).

John's father Ken does not credit John's version of his relationship with his mother.

We have a very strong difference on this. He tells me tales about his mother which are totally contrary to anything I knew of her. I never saw any signs of temper. The other [siblings] have said they never did. She was not volatile. Her father and brothers were hair-triggered, but I remember saying to Nancy: "How come you're not like them?" She said she hadn't been since her conversion (Ken Smith, interview, 1998).

For his part, John insists that his memories are accurate, and says he soft-peddled the account of his relationship with his mother in his 1997 autobiography, *On the Side of the Angels*, in order not to embarrass his family.

Dad was often away at work when these things happened. She would modify her behaviour when he was around. And if you talk to the other siblings, Joy will confirm what I've said, because she copped a lot of it, too. I get sick of hearing about male domestic

violence. Women have as much propensity for it: just less body weight behind it. But then I was a very difficult kid, with extreme introversion, and Joy could be [also]. Mum must have felt very frustrated (Smith, interview, 1998b).

John does acknowledge the intensity of his feelings toward his mother: "It left me with a perfectionist attitude toward her as my mother. The intensity I feel might be coloured by her moral perfectionism" (interview, 1998a). Difficult though it must have been for a child to bear this pressure of moral ambition from such a tender age, this may have been a crucial factor in the development of a leader whose transformational function, according to Burns, was to bring people to higher levels of morality and motivation. In all probability, the black and white nature of his mother's moral teaching helped him to achieve the clarity and straightforwardness of his own moral vision, crucial as such vision is for transformational leadership.

If John struggled in his relationship with Nancy, he had great respect and affection for his father Ken, and the two were close. "Humanly speaking, he has probably been the single biggest influence in my life," Smith writes (1987: 12). A slightly built, neat man with a quiet manner, Ken was converted to Christianity at the age of ten and had a "stern and uncompromising" biblical faith, but could be "a lot of fun" (Smith, 1987: 21). Their relationship was cemented on Saturday morning rabbit-hunting trips in the hills on the northern edge of Melbourne. John remembers these expeditions as the happiest times of his childhood, when in conversation or companionable silence he would find moments of contentment. His father, a fitter and turner by training, was a practical man who could, unlike some preachers, turn his hand to making and fixing things for his son. He was an outdoors man who was also an expert fisherman. John believes Ken was more able to express depth of emotion in the pulpit than at home. He was sometimes moved to tears when talking of God's grace and forgiveness. "One of the things he taught me, for which I'm eternally grateful, is the ability to cry," John writes. "Despite his reserve, my father was not afraid to shed tears if he felt something deeply" (1987: 13). Indeed John's own preaching was influenced by the "embarrassing vulnerability of (Ken's) preaching style. My sharing, feeling, talking side all comes from my father," he asserts (interview, 1998a). This vulnerability and willingness to express emotion in the pulpit was to become a significant factor in Smith's charisma. As he shared himself publicly with people, taking obvious risks in discussing very frankly such subjects as sexuality or personal values, they responded with sympathy and affection in the two-way charismatic relationship.

Though John admired his father greatly, he found his example difficult to emulate. "He seemed to me to be so honest, so upright, so resolute and certain. His language was without blemish and he was impatient with weakness" (1987: 61). John suspects, and Ken confirms, that it was a case of parents having unrealistically high expectations of their first (and for nine years their only) child. Ken acknowledges:

I was possibly too tough (on him) ... I didn't encourage him enough when he did right and I criticised him too hard when he did wrong. I had absorbed the Wesley method of raising children, i.e. very strict. He was the first child and at that stage you're still working out your thinking on child-rearing (Ken Smith, interview, 1998).

Early religious experience

The Wesleyan character extended to Smith's first major religious experience as a child of five. He had been misbehaving at church, excited by the fact that he had on a new pair of short trousers.

Dad sat me down ... and gave me a talk which has lived with me ever since. He said 'You've got ... new trousers on and you look pretty good. To look at you anyone would say 'What a nice little boy'. But let me show you something. He stepped over to the ... cabinet by the wall and picked up an apple which lay on top. It was a lovely apple without visible flaw. "There," Dad said. "Looks good, doesn't it?" Then, taking out his pocket knife, he sliced it in half. He opened the apple up and showed me the inside. It was literally rotten to the core. The effect on me was dramatic. I was struck by an overwhelming sense ... that my inward self had to be dealt with. I felt ashamed (Smith, 1987: 19).

John says he is glad of this gesture, coming as it did without an accompanying lecture. Referring to the doctrine that God works in people's lives to prepare them for eventual conversion, he states:

Prevenient grace hit me that night. Dad said 'That's a bit like you, son. You look real nice on the outside, but the way you behaved tonight there's some stuff in there God wants to do something about.' It was few words, but God's Spirit moved in and I felt at five years of age a desperate need to know the living God (address, 1997).

Ken agrees with the memory. "It's funny how God leads you. I was probably preparing for a children's talk, and I'd noticed the apple had a tiny spot on the outside, so I had it sitting there ready as an illustration of the fact that sin starts small and festers inside" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998). John defends his father

against the charge that it might have been a cruel and heartless gesture that would lead to the son's feeling inadequacy and guilt. "From that day on I've never been able to see the gospel in terms of other than moral transformation of the inner human being, ... a socially and morally transforming invasion ... by the living God" (address, 1997). John's long-term friend and counsellor John U'Ren is less generous in his memories of Ken Smith. "He was a guilt preacher," he says. "John's dad came annually to visit and preach at Mt Pleasant Methodist Church in Ballarat, where my dad was minister, and would usually preach on sin" (U'Ren, interview, 2000). U'Ren believes this theological bias had a profound influence on the development of John and his siblings.

Could this incident with the apple have sparked the development of Smith as a transformational leader, even by the age of five? Smith himself clearly attributes the start of his concern for moral transformation to that day. What he developed in the years ahead was the ability to impart his moral and social vision to others, and activate their dreams and ideals in this direction.

Traumatic accident

Shortly after this, when John was still five, there occurred another event that was to affect his life into adulthood. It is significant also because it involved his mother Nancy. While she was working in the laundry or 'washhouse' John came in to gaze at the fire under the copper. Nancy looked down at him to tell him to move away from the fire. As she did so she accidentally bumped the lid of the copper, knocking a scoop full of boiling water on to John, scalding him and giving him third-degree burns. John and his father believe that Nancy acted as best she could following the accident, taking off John's clothes and wrapping him in a cool sheet before rushing him to hospital. However the damage was done. The shock of the accident, with the burns, nearly killed him. Long periods of agonising pain were to follow, as John endured a four-month stay in hospital involving skin grafts that left permanent scarring on his back and down the length of his left arm. Could the difficulty in John's relationship with his already overprotective mother have been exacerbated by a sense of guilt on her part following the accident? "It's highly likely, though of course they knew much less about reacting to burns accidents back in the 1940s," he agrees (interview, 1998b).

The scars were a source of major shame to Smith as an adolescent, and continued to damage his self-esteem well into adulthood. He told Caroline Jones:

Teenage years were very troublesome regarding personal identity because the Bondi beach boy is kind of the Australian image. When I went to the beach I always wore a long-sleeved shirt. I passionately longed for the company of a woman...and yet I always felt that no woman would ever be able to accept me because of the scars (broadcast, 1987).

A bitter memory is of a young French teacher at a Gippsland High School who complained when during a heatwave John rolled up his sleeves, something he rarely did because of embarrassment about his scars. "In front of the whole class she said 'Cover that revolting thing up, Smith. It makes me sick'" (1987: 26). Smith regards the incident as having a profound effect on him, indicating it "killed in me a part of my adolescence" (broadcast, 1987).

Smith considers the burns incident a "suitably dramatic launch into a career of accident proneness" (1987: 32). In various other incidents which followed he was knocked unconscious for a full day and hospitalised again when he ran from behind a tram into a police car; his head was split open when he hopped, skipped and jumped from the kitchen into the washhouse door; years later he was impaled by an ornamental fitting on a car, which narrowly missed his liver, and on another occasion was stung by a stonefish. This history of accident-proneness was a factor to be considered when the opportunity came to ride high-powered motorcycles in a manner daring enough to warrant respect as a motorcycle club president. That Smith accepted the challenge speaks of the physical courage that is part of his charisma.

Serious illness

The third defining episode in John Smith's early life came with a tardily diagnosed case of rheumatic fever in the years prior to adolescence. In 1951 Ken was ordained as a Methodist minister, the possibility of going to the Congo having been ruled out through lack of financial support. The family moved to the manse in Raywood, in central Victoria. John's pain and swelling began in January 1952, but it was six months before the condition was diagnosed in Bendigo as severe rheumatic fever. "The doctors simply thought it was growing pains. I had enormous swelling and rheumatic pain, discovered months later to be serious rheumatic fever. By then my health had been damaged very severely"

(Smith, broadcast, 1987). He stayed in Bendigo hospital for several months while the fever raged, before being transferred to a local children's hospital, where through constant penicillin injections his temperature was lowered. Six months in a rehabilitation home were followed by a second and worse attack of the fever combined with Sydenham's chorea which resulted in weight loss, slurred speech and the inability to feed himself. Tests revealed extensive pericardiac scarring and diseased valves, with doctors telling Ken and Nancy to prepare for John's death.

[Those] two years, which for most kids entering puberty are a time of fun and freedom, were two years of very personal pain, sometimes almost at the point of sickness where the world ceased to exist for me. I think it was the great gift of life, though. It made me reflective and made me aware of pain in the world and aware of others in pain as well as my own pain (Smith, broadcast, 1987).

Smith's parents were naturally stunned at the doctors' conclusions, but in their different ways placed their faith in God's power. John considers his mother always believed he would survive, because she believed God's plan for him was to become the missionary she had not been able to be. "Dad didn't know what to believe" (Smith, 1987: 53). Ken went home from the hospital one day and was out digging in his vegetable garden, when he began speaking to God.

"I wasn't asking for anything, I was just having a conversation with him. I said 'Lord, there's nothing the doctors can do for John now. It's all up to you, you can do anything.' As I said that, I just had a complete assurance that the Lord was going to do it, and a sense of peace, and I went in and said to Nancy that I thought John was going to be alright" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998).

From that day, according to Ken, John's medical condition improved, and within a week he began to put on weight. By October 1954, at the age of twelve, he was released from hospital. His parents were told that for John any emotional excitement would mean death because of his damaged heart.

For a while Smith had a sense of being 'cotton-wooled', but as the years went by he found that he could participate in sport and exercise without apparent ill-effect. "Deep down I was scared of what might happen, but no problem arose," he wrote (1987: 54). His father recalls that by his mid teens John was neglecting to take his prescribed medication, again with no apparent ill-effect. There was a scare when John had severe chest pains, and Ken was told to expect the worst. He told John gently that he might not have long to live, but

eventually the pains were diagnosed as pneumonia and pleurisy in the left lung. It was not until John was a student teacher and disallowed entry to superannuation because of his medical history that he eventually saw a heart specialist and received the final verdict. "In your case we would expect the symptoms to be very clear," pronounced the doctor. But instead John had "a clinically perfect heart" (Smith, 1987: 56) and was recommended for both superannuation and life insurance. Says Ken: "They'd sent off down to the Children's Hospital in Melbourne to get his cardiograph records and so on, but what was in the correspondence bore no resemblance to his condition at the time of the examination" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998). In retrospect both John and Ken interpret the healing as clearly miraculous. "I ran out of the surgery with tears streaming down my face...leaping in the air like a crazy man feeling that the death sentence had been lifted, and praising God," John told Caroline Jones (broadcast 1987). "The sense of relief and release was indescribable. I'm sceptical about claims to miracles. [But] in this particular instance I will take a lot of persuading to believe that God's own healing processes were not at work in me. I can find no other logical explanation" (1987: 56-7).

Release on the threshold of adulthood from a virtually lifelong feeling of threat from sickness left John with a sense of having been spared in order to fulfil a particular destiny. He likens it to the way in which John Wesley's escape from a burning manse at the age of five left him with a sense of being, in the words of the prophet Zechariah, 'a brand plucked from the burning': bearing a responsibility to follow a special vocation for which he had been miraculously spared. "Sometimes I do feel a sense of destiny about the near escapes in my life. I feel responsible to do the job since being apparently spared so many times" (1987: 36). This sense of destiny, of revelation about a divinely ordained purpose, is one of the factors that Weber mentions as important in the endowment of charismatic leadership. One sees it sometimes in charismatic politicians such as Bob Hawke. It seems to contribute to the sense of self-assurance which is characteristic in charismatic giftedness.

A 'preacher's kid'

If there is a fourth defining factor in the early life of John Smith it is not a particular event but a general rootlessness in his life as a result of regular relocations and changes of school. The move to Raywood in 1951 was the first of a series as Ken Smith followed the normal career of a Methodist circuit minister, with a move expected every four to five years. John believes Ken's

evangelicalism (i.e. Bible-centred, low-church theology) cost him the opportunity of a city pastorate (Smith, interview, 1998a). His second appointment in 1956 was to Trafalgar, in Gippsland's cool and wet Latrobe Valley; then in 1960 to Chinchilla, west of Queensland's Darling Downs; and finally (as far as John was concerned) to Childers, on the central Queensland coast, in 1963. Smith believes that the most formative thing in his childhood, after the pain and confinement he suffered,

... would have been the struggle of living in a manse with a mum and dad who ... struggled to survive on a low income, ... and of shifting from town to town in Methodist circuits every four or five years, losing all your mates and having to re-form friendships hundreds or even thousands of miles from your last location. That's the kind of pain and alienation that I think was very formative in my life (Smith, broadcast, 1987).

Another alienating factor was that he came to each new situation not just as a 'new kid', but as a 'preacher's kid', with the stigma or at least the different expectations that that tag brings. "It's never easy being a preacher's kid, because other people demand an unreasonably high standard of behaviour from you. It's easy to resent that" (Smith, 1987: 61). "I found it really difficult to make friends" (Smith, 1987: 62). Bullying of the sickly new boy at one Latrobe Valley school meant that he had to change to another, about twenty kilometres away from his home, which made it hard to invite friends home. In addition, his supposed heart condition meant that initially he was prevented from participating in secondary school sports. He had just overcome most of these hurdles in 1960 when Ken accepted the offer to move to Queensland.

Chinchilla, on the Warrego Highway some 350 miles northwest of Brisbane en route for Charleville can be classified as outback 'Western Queensland'. After Gippsland it was dry geographically and culturally, though a much larger town than Trafalgar. It was a move that could be seen as disastrous for John. Academically he had just begun to apply himself in his matriculation year and was confident of getting the marks which would open up a place at university for him to study law, a vocation for which tests suggested he was well equipped. Instead the upset of the move and the change of education systems meant that, even with the help of correspondence lessons, he had to be content with the offer of a place at secondary teachers' college in Brisbane. Once again the family interpreted the result in religious terms. "He'd have done a lot better if we'd stayed in Gippsland," Ken believes now. "But what was the hand of

God in it all?" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998). As a lawyer he may not have become a Christian apologist and a charismatic leader.

What was behind the move? Gippsland was cold and wet, with regular frosts in winter. It was miserable for a manse family with little heating and dependent on parsimonious dairy farmers for a living. Nancy was suffering from arthritis, and the Smiths now had other children: Faye, born in 1950, Colin, born in 1953, Joy, adopted in 1953, Beverley, born in 1958. Beth was yet to be born. Joy's natural mother was in Melbourne, and there were some difficulties with her. "We thought Joy would be better off interstate," states Ken (interview, 1998). They applied for an exchange to Queensland, and by the time the offer of Chinchilla came through, they had raised the necessary funds through selling their domestic cow and two heifers. They stayed in Chinchilla until 1963 when, following Nancy's unexpected death, they moved to Childers near Hervey Bay.

For Ken and Nancy, the regular relocation was part of the package they accepted when together they chose the vocation of a pastor and his wife. They understood the sacrifices involved and were taking advantage of the scope for mobility in the move to Queensland. For John and his siblings it was a way of life thrust upon them: the life of a 'PK' or preacher's kid. Such a life affords experiences not enjoyed by many other children, such as exposure in their home to a wide range of people, or the opportunity to observe and often become very canny about people in crisis or difficulty. On the other hand it can give children a sense of being different, or excluded from the mainstream. "There's a suspicion that you're not quite normal, and that somehow you must be an apprentice parson yourself," John mused (1987: 62). He tells the story of how in 1959, when Billy Graham made his first visit to Australia, John got off the school bus to find a group of boys waiting for him ready with a soap box. "They physically lifted me on to the soap-box in front of a crowd of schoolkids and bowed down, yelling 'Give us a sermon, Billy Graham'. It made me feel branded by my father's occupation, like some farm animal" (1987: 62). Furthermore, the regular changing of schools experienced by most 'PKs' is something that tends to cast children very much upon their own psychological resources each time they have to leave the affirmation of one peer group and work toward acceptance in another. The result can be lowered self-esteem. All of these possible effects in John's case must have been exacerbated by the long periods of withdrawal through sickness.

Children react to sets of circumstances in different ways because of personality factors. Extroverted children often seem to cope better with mobility between schools, for example, than more introverted children. John Smith's developing personality naturally had a great bearing on his reaction to the rather unusual circumstances of his childhood and youth. The isolating influences may have led to him becoming a "bit of a loner" (Smith, 1987: 67), but he was very different from the classic loner type. For one thing he had the potential to be a natural leader, and in more normal circumstances might well have led his own social group, as he went on to do in adulthood. In addition he could be vociferous and contentious. "It wasn't just being a preacher's kid that made me feel like an outsider," he wrote. "I was that peculiar beast, the loud introvert. My father recently told me a teacher said I was one of the most argumentative children he'd ever taught. But I was all front. Inside was an uncertain swamp of introspection. And it was frighteningly lonely in there" (1987: 62). In the Myers-Briggs personality grid he is classified as a Type INTP, the modified introvert. In the Enneagram personality typology he agrees that he is best placed at number 8 (Smith, interview, 1998a), the combative and confrontational personality who finds security in feeling strong. He learned early that he had to be strong to survive.

I was a difficult kid. I didn't react to loneliness by letting myself be taken up with fantasy, but I was very introverted, and I'd be walking around the playground thinking about deep philosophical questions, which I could never talk about with the other kids, and that led to an intense loneliness. I might have been less lonely if I'd been born into ... another social construct. I refused to conform: I wanted to know about everything, and why. With soul and eyes wide open I read Sir James Jeans' book *The Mysterious Universe*, which I was given to read at about 10, and a sense of wonder and mystery concerning the stars was born in me. I never really found companionship in that" (Smith, interview, 1998b).

Ken Smith did not have trouble with his son. "He was never terribly difficult, though he could be very smart with the tongue. At Moe [High] School he was good at backchat, but not at home" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998). In fact it was arguing with a bully at Moe that finally led to him being beaten up and transferred to Warragul High. This was an extra move that must have further compounded the mobility syndrome.

A love of nature

Smith seems to have reacted to the isolation in both constructive and negative ways. On the one hand he grew to love the Australian countryside. As he

roamed it alone after school and at weekends he learned to appreciate the nuances of the different parts of the continent in which he found himself. He collected insects, lizards, and snakes, on which he became something of a local expert in Childers. He fished and hunted, collected flora and soil samples, and acquired a life-long taste for being alone in the bush. These would be qualifications for his later vocation as 'green' preacher and, for a while in the 1970s, a 'gumnut theologian'. The experience of social isolation may also have reinforced his introversion and intensity, as he spent hours alone ruminating on 'big questions' which tend not to occupy the minds of more socially successful adolescent boys. Later, as a transformational leader, it took Smith little effort to engage in higher order matters such as values, meaning and purpose, for he had been rehearsing this role since youth.

The downside of all this was that John became "a kid who until nearly 21 ... felt a shocking lack of self-worth" (magazine, 1989a: 31). He did not like his scarred body, his inability to play sport through supposed heart damage, his tendency to be a 'loud mouth', or his name. Having "the most predictable name in the English world" could cause problems, such as when a headmaster caned him for insolence for replying truthfully to the question "What's your name, son?" (1987: 72-3).

The period at Trafalgar seems to have been the most socially traumatic of his life. His shyness and his self-consciousness about his burns scars meant that he had to conduct normal teenage infatuations from a distance. He would ride his bicycle ten miles to sit for hours in the street opposite the house of one girl, never able to gather the courage to knock on her door, but just hoping for a glimpse of her before riding home. "We nailed some boards up into a big cypress tree for a treehouse, where John would spend hours supposedly studying. He was probably studying girls from up there, actually" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998). When eventually John was able to strike up real friendships with girls from church, the relationships invariably suffered as a result of Nancy's disapproval. "My first two attempts at adolescent romance were both disastrous," he remembers (interview, 1998b). When Nancy criticised ("that young chit") one girl, a recent convert, whom John was sitting with at a Christian rally he exploded in fury at her dismissiveness, resolving "never to trust my mother again" (1987: 75).

A transformational role model

It was not until his final year at Trafalgar that John began to feel secure among his peers. He settled down to study and made his "first really good friend": Geoff, a keen sportsman and later school captain. "I drew a lot of confidence from that friendship and gained kudos, too, because he was a popular figure" (Smith 1987: 76). By this stage he was tentatively beginning to play sport, though he was an awkward beginner. He became good at baseball - until an injury forced him to give it up - and at middle and long distance running. Another event that year encouraged John in his unfashionable values. As part of the Billy Graham visit, a professional basketball player, Bill Dunlap, visited Warragul High School.

Until he came, faith and moral character was for the birds. But he took on the whole school (at basketball) and creamed them all. He told funny stories and had us rolling in the aisles. With ... gentle but intense compassion he lifted our vision to a life of faith and meaning we never saw in our ... textbooks. For the rest of the year it was cool to talk about religion, Jesus, about not doing it before you get married, making a difference in the world, and caring for others more than just yourself. And for the rest of my life tears would come to my eyes ... when I ... think of that wonderful day in class (Smith, magazine, 1998).

Smith credits that day as the impulse that drove him later in life to lead 'Values for Life' seminars in more than 3000 Australian secondary schools. In a more general way Dunlap's visit provided one of the first inspiring examples of role-modelling in transformational leadership. He saw for the first time that it was possible in a high school to direct students' attention successfully to higher order values and needs and matters of ethical and moral concern. While he would never be able to work off his basketball skills to get a hearing, he would eventually find another way to, quite literally, roar into a school and command positive attention.

Literary interests

Being an introvert and a loner did have the great advantage of inclining Smith to take advantage of his father's considerable library, which included many theological books and collections of sermons, as well as popular classics such as Dickens. Ken himself had been a voracious reader as a child, and many of the favourite books he kept were ones John read. These included books such as Hugo's *Les Miserables*, a biography of Abraham Lincoln, and *A Tale of Two Cities*. The protest against injustice inherent in these books appealed to the sympathy for the underdog which was already a feature of John's personality.

Ken had some thirty books on Methodism and John Wesley, and he believes that it was the social gospel aspect of Methodism that from the beginning absorbed John. By adulthood John had three times as many books on Wesley and Methodism as his father. John was particularly attracted to the sermons of American preacher Billy Sunday. Sunday, a former professional baseball player, had a dramatic style. "[His] language was visual and working class, and it used to upset the more genteel of his audiences" (Smith, 1987: 67). But Smith believes it was *Les Misérables* which was probably most influential. "[It] had a major place in the destiny of my own life and ministry. My father understood my character very well. When I was still pre-adolescent, but a very keen reader, he gave me the unabridged edition of that book. He said: 'You wouldn't be able to read this, it's too hard.' I said 'Yeah? Then I'll read it'" (magazine, 1989b: 27). Ken felt the novel would strike a chord with John's increasingly evident passion for the sinned-against underdog, and indeed John found that the book "sowed a number of intuitive feelings in [his] heart that many years later [he] picked up on and which are central to [his] thinking" (1987: 69). These included a conscious dissatisfaction with social injustice, and with legal processes that are biased in favour of those with power and prestige; an indication that there was an important place for a religious response to social problems; that the anti-social person is not necessarily a sinner, but is likely to have been sinned against equally; and a conviction that the Bible was right and not just romantic in saying that people can be changed morally. In other words, the book helped clarify Smith's convictions that transformation of people was possible, that 'depraved' or victimised people can be redeemed and motivated toward moral values and conduct. It encouraged Smith in wanting to lead people in that direction himself.

Not all of John's Methodist influences were of the 'social gospel' variety:

Mum's interest was very much in the American holiness camp meeting style, such as you find to this day in the south. She wanted me to go to Bob Jones University (a famous fundamentalist campus attended for a while by the young Billy Graham until he found it too conservative). Dad was very balanced: on the one hand he received material from Cliff College which had the English social content of Methodism. On the other hand he received holiness material from America and the conservative political magazine 'Sword of the Lord'. But the British Methodism had a vigorous Anglican patristic emphasis, which [took] seriously church history back to the early fathers. Wesley himself was an enlightenment man with an evangelical hermeneutic but equally an emphasis on the experimental [in the sense of experiential] nature of faith. So I grew up with the social emphasis held alongside American revivalism's rich religious conviction and emotion, on what seems now to have

been like a tiny island of religious culture ... which was totally out of sync with the whole of Australian culture. On one side was mum's obsession with personal, forensic holiness, on the other was Dad's 'Thy Kingdom Come' theology" (Smith, interview, 1998a).

Ken maintains that from early on the social emphasis was dominant in John's mindset. "It was present in the preaching of [Australian Methodist leaders] like the Rev. Alan Walker but John took it directly from his reading of and about the original English Methodists" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998).

John's loathing of injustice combined with his sometimes pugnacious nature at times shocked Ken's parishioners. On one occasion when the Rotary Club was holding a meeting in the Trafalgar church hall, a calf belonging to the Smiths wandered into the hall, and in the ensuing panic, opened its bowels and upset the tables, spoiling the occasion. An official, whom Ken recalls was the richest man in Gippsland, called 16 year-old John and told him to summon his father to answer for the situation. When John replied that Ken was out doing pastoral visitation, Ken says the man replied: "He's only a preacher, and if he's got nothing better to do than that, he should be here looking after his bloody animal". Ken asserts: "John had tremendous respect for me. He replied 'Listen, I won't have a big fat slob like you talking about my father like that'" (Ken Smith, interview, 1998). John writes that he went on to defend his father whom he said worked hard for peanuts while "fat cats" like the man sat back and had others make millions for them. "It was a very high-handed response from a teenager, and he was understandably livid, but then so was I" (1987: 60). High-handed it might have been, but it was characteristic of the kind of approach Smith would later use in his prophetic ministry, earning him antagonists as well as friends around the world.

A natural debater

Ken sensed that his eldest son was a natural debater, and did all that he could to stimulate and develop the talent.

My quarter-Irish blood meant that I loved a good debate. I would think it was true when (John) says I taught him to think. He'd come in and make some outlandish, though often true, statement. I'd reckon he had heard it somewhere, and I would challenge him and push him to think it through for himself. Unlike the other (siblings), he would play the game and debate back. Then he'd bait me to get me going (Ken Smith, interview, 1998a).

Intuitive thinking was one of John's natural gifts which Ken felt needed to be disciplined. John writes: "I had a tendency to run on feeling and intuition. Left to my own devices I would have become ... a mawkish sentimentalist, but Dad disciplined me to be different, and he could be quite brutal" (1987: 70). Ken's strength was in analysis and finding faults in an argument, just as he had been trained to find the fault in broken adding machines. "I'd say something that I felt deeply but had not really thought through, and he'd interrogate me. Sometimes he'd destroy a case I was making, and just when I felt totally beaten, he'd stop and say "Well done. That was a good effort. In actual fact I agree with you"", recalls John, adding that his father was, intellectually, a hard taskmaster (1987: 71). This encouragement in developing the skills to publicly articulate and defend his intuitive views was without doubt helpful in Smith's evolution as a leader. Charismatic leaders are by nature intuitive people, but they need to learn the skills of communicating and defending their beliefs. John may have been too isolated to become involved with any formal debating groups, but Ken's prompting and discipline were good substitutes.

Spiritual development

Along with John's moral and intellectual development grew his spiritual maturity. From Ken's point of view, John responded positively to his Christian upbringing, taking on from the age of five a basic and continuing, though rather unsteady, commitment to the faith.

John always wanted to go on with the Christian life, but it was not until he was at Teachers' College that it became a solid, sound experience. [Before this], with a Methodist holiness background, he got a view of the Christian life beyond perhaps what a young fellow could expect of himself. He had a well-trained, perhaps over-trained, conscience. He didn't really understand that the New Testament says that if we confess our sins, God is ready to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness (Ken Smith, interview, 1998).

Perhaps the fact that he was slow to grasp the concept of God's grace in this way was a factor in his transformational drive. Sometimes a profound realisation of God's mercy and forgiveness lessens a Christian's drive to preach morality and good works: he/she would rather stress God's grace than the need for improved moral and ethical performance. It may well be that John's "over-trained conscience" was a crucial factor in the development of his transformational leadership.

From John's point of view his religious development was a series of false starts, as sixteen times he went forward at altar appeals to commit himself to following Christ. Might he have been expecting each time to experience the moral perfection that his mother implied characterised the Christian, only to find each time that he still fell short, and that his shaky self-esteem came quickly into play to condemn him? "Each response was as thoroughly sincere as the time before," he writes. "But somehow after a few weeks, or as little as a few days, I'd be back where I started from. It never seemed to stick. It was just a set of beliefs I'd borrowed which would do for the time being" (1987: 74). A sense of "the living God" had been in him since the incident with the apple at the age of five, but in moral and discipleship terms his understanding of the Christian faith was proving hard to match up with reality. His parents, particularly his mother, would sometimes highlight the problem to him in no uncertain terms. Ken shares this story: "Once when John was in his mid-teens we were driving into Warragul for a night out when Nancy asked him where his watch was. He lied about having left it behind. She knew where it was, and pinned him down. I said "Oh John, you've got some things to get right with the Lord. You'd better confess" (interview, 1998). John remembers the incident:

That was fairly typical of the way Mum would set you up for the kill. Dad's response was typically even-handed. In the moral area, I reacted in a similar way to the way I reacted academically. I thought: 'If I try hard and get ordinary results I'm done. On the other hand if I 'crash it' and just make it through then they can't say I couldn't do better (Smith, interview, 1998b).

A 'closet' atheist finally finds faith

Smith believes that being a 'preacher's kid' impeded steady spiritual growth. "It's difficult to find your own faith. When your parents are so much part of the church, somehow your beliefs aren't quite your own" (1987: 61). He adds: "My father's habit of playing devil's advocate helped me to realise that, if I was to believe anything, then I really had to believe it. It was no use picking up on my parents' faith second-hand. Ironically, this was to lead me into unbelief, but not before I'd tried hard to believe" (1987: 71). John regards this loss of faith, which took place while he was studying to become a teacher at the Queensland Institute of Technology, as very formative: "a great desert experience", as he told Caroline Jones (broadcast 1987). It remained a 'closet' experience because he couldn't bear to hurt his father. Nor did he wish to lose his Christian friends. "It's weird that I could have lost faith when I had memories and powerful impressions of personally experienced evidence, but the dilemma was: either I

was a hopeless moral failure, or God wasn't there" (Smith, interview, 1998b). For a time he chose the latter option, but only with a great sense of despair. "When I lost faith, I felt (God's) face was turned away ultimately," he states, adding that it was one of the most significant times in his life. "In God's good grace...it led me to an understanding of and a feeling for the twentieth century and its lostness and its desperate attempt to find an identity and a meaning in the universe that now by definition has none" (broadcast, 1987). Smith believes the period was a gift in his later work with university students, artists and other thinkers.

The more creative, sensitive people within our community are the ones who have so much more to offer but who, in this particular century, have been driven so far away from the church, from formal faith and religion, and I feel amongst them and with them. The cesspool of brokenness that inspires most of the music and art of today has become the great inspiration of my life in a more positive way (Smith, broadcast, 1987).

It took this period of closet atheism before John finally found faith he called his own. At that time a fiery fundamentalist, George Francis, preached at QIT on the topic *60 Sins named in the New Testament..* By this stage John was involved in his first sexual relationship with a fellow college student who, like him, was undergoing a process of questioning and re-evaluation. Their sleeping together, like their apostasy, remained secret. "(George Francis) spoke powerfully against hypocrisy and against moral selfishness, warning us not against hell but our own sinful selfishness" (Smith, 1987: 82). Francis was as bullish a confrontationist in style as John himself could be, and when John stood at the altar, along with his girlfriend and others in their circle, he knew that his seventeenth altar appeal experience was somehow going to be different. "It was a completely overwhelming sense of connection with God. The experience itself doesn't prove anything to anyone but me. But I knew in my heart that from now on everything was going to be different. Nothing that's happened since has given me any reason to go back on that" (Smith, 1987: 84). Having experienced personally for a while the agnostic values of so many of his generation, Smith was now reconfirmed in his moral vision, and more confident and assured than previously in proclaiming it to the world. Whether anyone would want to listen was the question.

Smith took up lay preaching but found that, despite great effort and preparation and being "utterly convinced" that the gospel could meet people's needs, he was not convincing in preaching the message. He began to ride a bicycle out into the

countryside each morning to pray, prostrating himself on a mat of fallen gum leaves to plead that God would use him more effectively. Before long he had an experience that he believes was essentially Pentecostal, the kind that Christians often term being 'filled' or 'baptised' with the Holy Spirit. "It was as if I was an empty jug and God poured the essence of his love and character into me, filling me to the brim. I can't prove it, but it was real to me" (Smith, 1987: 126-7). From that point he experienced both prayer and worship as being more real and fulfilling, and believed that his preaching became more convincing (in terms of people's response) without any particular change of technique or subject matter. In addition he became more sensitive to what he understands as divine guidance. Whether or not one believes in the objective power of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, what is crucial is that Smith felt divine power at work in his ministry from this point. This gave him a sense of assurance which helped him develop the confidence and air of command so important to a charismatic leader.

Nancy's death

John graduated from QIT with high distinctions, although his low self-esteem prevented him from ascertaining his grades until 35 years later when he needed to know them for further study purposes (interview, 1998a). All that he cared to know at the time was that he had passed, in order for him to take up a teaching position for a year in Chinchilla in 1962. It was during this year that his mother died. She had already undergone one operation for varicose veins, and on the journey to hospital for a second such operation, Ken Smith had a premonition that Nancy would die. "I felt an intuition that I'd never bring her home," he declares (interview, 1998). After the operation medical staff were unable to bring Nancy back to consciousness. She suffered a cerebral haemorrhage, due to an aneurism at the base of the brain. She had been troubled with high blood pressure and headaches throughout her life, without ever knowing why. Nancy lingered for a month before dying. Ken controlled his grief to preach at her funeral. "If I can't stand up at my hour of greatest need, then I have nothing to say," he told the congregation (Smith, 1987: 96). Following the funeral, Ken found himself with five dependent children, including two under the age of four. "I knew I just had to live day by day, trusting God in the details," (Ken Smith, interview, 1998). John's sister Faye, who at 13 was not showing academic inclination, was given permission to leave school to look after her infant sisters, which she did until Ken remarried two years later. "After his mother died, John was magnificent in moral support for me," Ken recalls. "Pastors have to be careful what they say, but with John I could take risks and talk about things. He

was an oyster: absolutely discreet and I felt a great security in being able to talk with him" (interview, 1998). John is thankful that he was reconciled with his mother before she died. "Shortly after my return to faith, I found that I was able to talk to her once more," he states. "The sense of forgiveness I experienced did liberate me. I was able to feel warmth and love for mum, and we grew quite close" (1987: 94). This sense of closure in a difficult relationship contributed to a sense that he could act with integrity to preach forgiveness and reconciliation as a leader to his audiences and followers.

Significantly, perhaps, his sexual relationship ended soon after the conversion experience. Perhaps John, with his always-fragile self-esteem threatening condemnation, sensed that his renewed commitment to faith and Christian discipleship might be jeopardised by the relationship's continuing, even with its guilty beginnings forgiven and them both back in the fold. Possibly too the fact that the break-up occurred shortly after the sudden death of his mother is significant. Grieving for her and still feeling her perfectionistic influence, might his return to belief in God's judgment have inspired in him a *timor mortis* which motivated him to rid his life of every trace of past sin? Smith himself is wary of such psychological theories, although he sees the break-up as connected with his return to faith. "The love affair became inextricably tangled with my own internal struggles," he affirms (1987: 80). Once the faith struggles were resolved, perhaps the relationship lost its relevance. "When I got on my feet again spiritually, as happens so often with intense emotional relationships where the other (person) doesn't share the intensity of the journey, the wheels fell off" (Smith, interview, 2000b). Whatever the case, John told his father, who was fond of the young woman concerned, that he just couldn't go on with it. In his autobiography he acknowledged the trauma his decision caused her. "The end ... left her desperately hurt. To this day I feel remorse at what I put her through" (1987: 80). Still a practising Christian, she has never married.

Right-wing politics

At 21 John Smith was a fundamentalist Christian, and increasingly held extreme right-wing political views. This latter development came about partly through the influence of his father, who as he moved from urban unionist to country parson leant more to views sympathetic to the interests of his conservative rural flocks. But John, having taken his father's lead in this, went to extremes, reading voraciously American right-wing tracts (such as John Rice's 'Sword of the Lord', which specialised in promoting Catholic/Communist conspiracy

theories), and becoming an avid fan of Richard Nixon, whose fortunes in the 1960 U.S. presidential election he closely followed. "I was to remain comfortable and relatively unchallenged in these views for the next five or six years" (Smith, 1987: 94). Today he considers that his reactionary political views then were very much tied to the modernist fundamentalism he embraced following his conversion. While his father was a conservative evangelical, John considers himself to have become something of a bigot. "I was a raging fundamentalist in the first half of the Vietnam war, far more than Dad ever was. He didn't know how crazy I was, how screwed my head got at that stage. I really kept it from him, I loved him so much" (interview, 2000a).

In 1963, a year after the death of Nancy Smith, Ken Smith moved to pastor the Methodist Church at Childers, a small sugar-cane town between Bundaberg and Maryborough in the Queensland coastal hinterland, where extended family could lend support in caring for the children. A family friend with influence in the Education Department helped arrange for John to be appointed to teach at a primary school in Childers on compassionate grounds. In Childers John met a cane farmer's daughter, Glenna Walker, who had grown up in the Brethren church, and whose father he admired as open-minded and generous in spite of his strict church background. John was attracted to Glenna above all for her compassion to others and to him. "She understood (people's) feelings and could put herself in their position. She lived for others rather than herself" (Smith 1987: 98). When she saw John's burn scars, Glenna reacted not with horror or embarrassment as many did, but with what he described as "the pure, loving instinct which is her hallmark. She simply ran her hand tenderly down (his) arm and said in a voice full of gentleness and warm sympathy: 'Oh, you poor guy'" (1987: 27). Their bond was soon strengthened by the sudden death of Glenna's father from a heart attack while on a hunting trip. John was able to comfort Glenna in their mutual loss of a relatively young parent.

Smith's desire to train for Christian ministry as either a missionary or pastor returned with his regained faith. Glenna shared John's willingness to risk all for a life of Christian discipleship. Her ambition was to become a missionary. As their relationship grew they considered serving together overseas, and planned for John to study at the Melbourne Bible Institute for a Diploma of Theology while Glenna would stay at home to help care for her siblings. John wrote daily to her from Melbourne, and after some months they were engaged. Glenna followed John the following year to college. Typically for an evangelical establishment at that time, they were not allowed to even converse without

special permission. Once a week, with other engaged couples, they were allowed to walk around the block outside the college for half an hour. Smith remained unmarried, fundamentalist and politically conservative for most of the 1960s. It would take until the end of that decade before the effect of marriage and a child, teaching in a secular Victorian high school, and a consequent radical shift of worldview would open the way into his life's major work: that of becoming an unordained 'apostle' to the secular 'gentiles' of Australia, and to marginalised or alternative groups in modern society such as bikers, the poor and artists.

The seeds of his eventual direction as a transformational communicator and leader can be seen as having been sown in an early life with more than its fair share of trauma, physical pain, isolation, displacement and alienation from the conventional mainstream of Australian culture. His unusual childhood gave Smith keen insight and empathy for those on the 'outside' of life, and a desire to see a more just world. His high degree of childhood trauma and loneliness was part of the preparation for his vocation as a prophetic religious leader, and was one of the major reasons for the passion and 'fire in the belly' which were crucial in his charismatic and transformational leadership. As Smith himself explained:

The pain that lies behind [people's surface actions and responses to one another] has been very real for me and has led me to feel great compassion for the marginalised, 'not normal' people who in any way, even in their ideas, find themselves pushed to the edge of what is acceptable and comfortable. I feel a passionate desire to affirm and encourage people like that, and I love working with people who have no hope, who are broken and [have been] written off. The poor, broken and wounded have brought me my greatest moments: moments of being with [them] and seeing hope come in a face that gave up hope years ago (broadcast, 1987).

A "fortunate life"

For John Smith, with his Protestant faith, pain is not in itself redemptive as much as inspiring of empathy. "I do feel we don't take seriously enough the horror of the consequences of man's inhumanity to man. I would say that suffering is clarifying rather than purifying in the redemptive sense: it helps us to understand the hurt" (interview, 1998a). His own suffering certainly fulfilled that role for him. "My overwhelming sense is that my pain and suffering, small as they were comparatively, put me in touch with a scarred world. There was an element of self-pity in what I felt in hospital and as a lonely child, when I longed for companionship, friendship and love. But I had enough world-awareness not

to feel myself marked out. I never felt God was punishing me" (interview, 1998a). Generally he tries to view a positive side to pain. "I hate unreality. Society is cosmetic, in that it says: don't face your problems; keep them down with drugs or whatever form of denial. But an element of suffering is reality" (interview, 1998a). Smith cites C.S. Lewis' dictum that pain is God's "megaphone to rouse a deaf world" (Lewis, 1977 :81) but admits there are circumstances for which this is inadequate.

The most horrific thing is to see children in pain. When I walk through a hospital and see children with burns or bad scars I close my eyes within me and say 'I can't understand. It isn't fair!' I don't believe God wants anyone to suffer. I'm a non-Calvinist. But I do believe that at times people must be allowed to suffer the consequences of their actions in order to learn. If you allow that as being redemptive, then okay, but pain doesn't have any cleansing power in itself. Redemption comes from God and God alone (interview, 1998a).

For those like myself who did not share John Smith's conservative evangelical background, the strictures of his childhood may elicit some sympathy. He himself is not sure that the advantages did not outweigh the disadvantages.

In some ways my background is like that of an orthodox Jewish kid. There was the same intensity, the same strictness, the same moral expectation, and the same desire of the parent above all to instil a sense of God in the child. It's not all bad when I consider the deconstructed world in which my own kids are now struggling to bring up their children. In one sense parents did have the right to live out their best aspirations through their children. Anthropologically, that's the case in all healthy societies. Being brought up in perfectionism underscores the fact that there is no perfection: yet one must strive for it. People (today) have absurd aspirations for total freedom, and as a consequence the disciplines have all become determinist. Considering (all this), I'm not so sure I didn't have a very fortunate life (interview, 1998a).

CHAPTER 3

From Conservative to Radical

A number of key factors can be identified in the formation of John Smith as a charismatic and transformational religious leader in the period from 1968 to 1972. These include marriage to a partner who would support and encourage him in this direction; confrontation with the world of the 1960s; a sense of vocation to “gentiles”; and a ‘liminal’ period with consequent process of reaggregation and redirection of goals. By 1972 Smith had completed his metamorphosis, and with his charismatic gifts considerably developed was ready for his role as a leader in the Jesus Movement, and as president of God’s Squad Motorcycle Club.

The choice of a partner

John Smith and Glenna Walker were married in 1968 following their graduation from MBI. Part of John’s course involved a placement as part-time pastor for a rural Methodist circuit in South Gippsland. In his final year he spent weekends working in the three small centres of the Glen Forbes circuit. He was invited to stay on in 1969 as part-time pastor, in addition to teaching three days a week at Wonthaggi High School. The couple moved to an old manse beautifully situated on a hill overlooking the countryside.

Glenna’s partnership was crucial to John’s development. She was a passionate and determined woman, to a degree sheltered and naive, and idealistic enough in her faith to put up with a way of life at which many people may have balked. In personality she is not herself a leader, but one who enjoys being the close support to and confidante of a leader. As family friend John U’Ren observed, Glenna is “totally loyal” to John, convinced both of his Christian qualities and potential greatness, and not always discreet when speaking out in his defence.

I don’t know of anyone who is more suited to being married to John than Glenna, and vice-versa. They are incredibly well-matched. They have terrible arguments, and shout at each other, and sometimes people get very shocked at the way they speak to each other, but they are very transparent in the way they live their married life (U’Ren, interview, 2000).

Glenna is physically strong and robust. She sacrificed comfort, convention and respectability when she felt her calling demanded it. Each of these qualities was to be strongly tested in her marriage. As she would say more than thirty years later. “Here we are at 58, when most people are getting ready to retire, in debt and without

a washing machine, stove or 'fridge that work. Why? Because we've been serving the flipping poor all this time. Every time we were given some money, we pooled it" (Glena Smith, interview, 2000). As she nears 60 Glenna is less idealistic about living communally than she was, but the fact that she was willing to live initially by gifts and donations, and never on a very substantial income, allowed John to function as a charismatic leader. In addition to putting up with this necessary adjunct of charismatic giftedness, she gave John extraordinary freedom to work away from home for long periods, and to come and go as he needed.

Confrontation with the world of the 1960s

The newlywed Smiths' shared compassion for the needy put them under immediate pressure. While establishing their first home in 1968 and adjusting both to ministry and to living with each other, they took in two children of missionaries from New Guinea. Aged 14 and 11, these boys had been sent south for their education and needed somewhere to live and be cared for. The old manse may have been beautifully situated, but it was primitive, rat-ridden and made of warped timber which creaked with any movement, so the young lovers felt very inhibited in their love-making. Despite this their son Paul was born in nearby Cowes in 1969. John was teaching thirty periods a week at Wonthaggi High and pastoring three country churches, which meant preparing and delivering up to six sermons a week as well as doing visitation. The two boys from New Guinea needed help with all the normal problems of adjusting to a new environment. The frantic, chaotic pace for the Smiths' compassionate lifestyle was established for the decades ahead. Glen Forbes was a generous but old-fashioned and conservative church community. The people warmly supported each other and were a tight group, but Smith believes now they barricaded themselves off from the reality of Australian life and its developing culture (1987: 108). In retrospect he feels he encouraged them in this. He told church teenagers to burn their pop music records, for example, believing them to be evil, just as his mother Nancy might have done. But change was afoot, and John gradually began to understand that his advice was alienating the young people around him from their peers.

It was some of the younger teachers with whom Smith taught at Wonthaggi - most of them recent graduates of Melbourne's (at that time) radical Monash University - who were catalysts in starting the seismic shift that would shake the foundations of John's life and thinking. They were influenced by the entire 1960s cultural and sexual revolution, and were doing their best to popularise relativist values among students. A fundamentalist minister with right-wing political views and a forceful personality was unlikely to be popular in the staff room, and Smith was not. "One

woman ... , Marge, gave me a really hard time," Smith recalls. "She went out of her way to try and shock [me]. She had the habit of letting rip a string of obscenities when I entered the staff-room in order to declare her antagonism to what I stood for (1987: 110). The Vietnam war, which Smith with his keen enthusiasm for Richard Nixon supported wholeheartedly, was in progress. One day a group of teachers sarcastically challenged him as to where his friend 'Tricky Dicky' stood with regard to Jesus' statement "Blessed are the peacemakers".

I couldn't find a reply. That's not to say I didn't reply ... [but] I couldn't find a reply that satisfied me. ... I do remember the question hitting home and the conviction that I needed to find a real answer. I began to say to myself 'If I don't like what they're doing with the verse, "Blessed are the peacemakers", then what do I do with it that's better?' It was a crucial incident; a turning point. This piece of innocent point-scoring ... made me seriously re-evaluate what I believed. It made me look again at what the Bible said about the things I'd been challenged over by my colleagues: war and peace, wealth and poverty, black and white, men and women (Smith, 1987: 112).

As he re-read the gospels and in turn the Old Testament prophets, with their call to justice and compassion, it was a revelation to him. Smith was disturbed to find that the tradition in which he was steeped, which claimed the Bible as its sole source of authority, was not necessarily biblical at all. He watched the TV news with new eyes. He was horrified to realise that organisations such as the FBI and the CIA, which he had considered heroic bastions of freedom against communism, were in many ways deeply compromised. The Mai Lai incident, where a marine soldier in Vietnam, Lt. Calley, gave orders for his men to gun down a group of women and children, shook Smith to the core, and finally changed his attitude to the war. The incident, along with the Life magazine series of pictures on U.S. treatment of the North Vietnamese people, was proof to him that the U.S. was not God's own country after all. Neither was it acting consistently with Jesus' words to "Love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you."

How could he have assented to treating his neighbour as less than human? How could he have supported the abuse of women and children? Smith realised he had been too accepting of the status quo. The conservative evangelical belief that personal conversion of individuals was the answer to the world's problems now appeared insufficient, for sometimes even those who were 'soundly converted' committed terrible injustices. "The structures and patterns of society needed to be transformed, too," he recognised. "It wasn't so much a change from right to left as a move away from the narrow, closely defined picture of the world that my beliefs had trapped me in" (1987: 114). He reflected that Christianity had been a cosy escape for him, not only from foreign situations like Vietnam, but from what was

happening in the Australian culture. "It was as if I ... had deliberately chosen not to listen to the people who could tell us what was really going on in our generation" (1987: 115). Having missed out on what was happening in the 1960s, Smith determined to live out his faith more socially and politically in the 1970s. He would treat his Bible not just as a signpost to eternity, but as a pointer to change and a more compassionate world. "The world needs transforming" was the thought with which he entered the new decade. At this juncture Smith's theological understanding was finally aligning with his transformational instincts.

Full-time evangelist

At the end of the 1969 school year Smith left Wonthaggi and teaching for a position in Melbourne with the evangelistic organisation, Campaigners for Christ (CFC). CFC operated as a service ministry for Protestant, conservative evangelical churches needing evangelists for short-term missions. Smith served an apprenticeship under an experienced evangelist, Graham Smith, whose preaching techniques and mannerisms influenced John, and whose example of disciplined commitment he attempted to follow. Also involved in CFC was another young Methodist, John U'Ren, at that time a parole officer, who was to become a lifelong associate of Smith's and a fellow radical among evangelicals. U'Ren recalls: "[At CFC] John learned the rhetoric of American-style gospel preaching" (interview 2000). As part of his apprenticeship Smith acted as master of ceremonies and song-leader for Graham Smith, waving his arms around in the manner of Cliff Barrows (Billy Graham's song leader). The conservative image he presented belied the fact that by now he was listening to Bob Dylan and reading Sartre, Camus, Gandhi, Nietzsche, Hesse, and Jacques Ellul, among others.

Smith's first solo evangelistic 'crusade' took place late in 1970 in Mt Isa, Queensland, the outback mining town to which he had considered fleeing during his period of closet atheism in the early sixties. He was the last-minute replacement for a well-known evangelist, and was horrified to discover that one of his team members was Richie Gunston, a loquacious country and western singer, who made a crude gimmick of his own obesity. Gunston, with an earthy, politically incorrect but sharp sense of humour born of years of circus spruiking, was well accepted by the rough Mt Isa audience. Smith, still in his dark suit and sober tie, was so embarrassed that he made jokes about his team members in order to distance himself from them, and tried to teach them to be more sophisticated.

In retrospect, they were kinder than they could have been, considering my self-righteous assumption of moral superiority. Richie in particular pinned me down about how uptight I was. He made me see that here in

Mt Isa we weren't talking to the usual crusade-meetings crowd. Here I was for the first time talking about Christianity to people who'd scarcely ever been in a church in their lives. You couldn't use the same words because they wouldn't understand church jargon. The plain fact was that he could communicate to this audience better than I ever could. He was 'fair dinkum'. Genuine. I realised that I wasn't (Smith, 1987: 122).

Smith grasped that he was seeing people as souls to be saved rather than flawed people who needed to be made whole, real people with whom he needed to identify in their joys and pain. As a result he dropped some of his formality, and the crusade made some headway.

As a result of this experience Smith viewed church evangelism differently. He now noticed how few outsiders were present in church meetings. The institutional church, which was seen as part of the established order and rejected by much of the post-war generation who were now reaching early adulthood, appeared increasingly irrelevant. Believing the gospel message to be vital and culturally relevant, Smith recognised that he had to try something else, beginning with talking and listening to those outside the church.

Accepting a vocation as 'apostle to the gentiles'

At this point in late 1970 a religious experience Smith had undergone seven years earlier, shortly after his return to faith and 'baptism in the Holy Spirit', began to make sense to him. In response to what he considered a "divine nudge" one day in 1963, Smith had spontaneously entered a house he did not know, to find a group of Christians praying. One of the group announced that he believed he had a message from God for someone present. Smith recalls:

I can't prove it was a message from God or that I was the one he was referring to, but I felt as though the man was speaking directly to me. And one of the things he said was that I would become 'an apostle to the Gentiles, not to the Jews' (1987: 127).

Smith understood this Pauline imagery to mean that he was called to preach the gospel not to those already influenced by the church - the modern-day equivalent of the Jews - but rather to the people outside the church, who like the Gentiles of Paul's day were often considered as undesirable outsiders. Some eight years later, after the Mount Isa crusade, the experience was repeated in a different group, again consisting of people he did not know, with someone prophesying the same words about his becoming an 'apostle to the Gentiles'. By that stage Smith felt the words were confirmation of the vocation he had already accepted.

I began to read the New Testament and (I understood) that God was calling me out of the synagogue into the streets and I understood the Damascus road (experience), the conflict Paul had. It was like that to me, crazy to me, and I didn't know where I was going, but just knew that I saw a blinding light as it were, and God says 'Get out there and preach to the non-converted, to the people who are outside the shadow of the sanctuary'. And in the first two years three and a half thousand came to the Lord (Smith, interview, 2000b).

By the start of 1971 Smith realised that if he was to take seriously his vocation to the 'Gentiles' of Australia he faced a steep learning curve. Apart from his crash course of reading and catching up on popular music, which to his surprise he found he enjoyed, he sought opportunities to talk with young people living on the streets, with secular students, and with those who frequented the Australian institution of 'the pub'. As he increasingly identified with his "Gentiles" Smith adopted the alternative fashions of the day: long hair, beard, and hippy-style floral shirts. "This was no trendy vicar gimmick. There no longer seemed any reason to pursue the respectability I once thought was so important" (Smith, 1987: 129). Glenna, who had relished the strict social respectability enforced at Melbourne Bible College, found it hard to come to terms with the rapid change in Smith. One day she said to him in tears: "I don't even know who you are any more. You're not the same man I married. It's not that ... I doubt you, I just don't understand the changes" (Smith, 1987: 129). Smith commented:

She'd made a decision for better or for worse to be married to a certain kind of guy, then suddenly she finds herself married to a guy who's born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. All her friends and relatives are on one side, her husband's racing out over the other side, and she's somewhere in between (magazine, 1980: 8).

On another occasion she said to him: "I know you're my husband, but I have no idea if you're my friend", which devastated the man who was by then becoming an acknowledged pundit on Australian mateship (magazine, 1980: 8). Smith's habit, from his isolated childhood, was to do his thinking alone, and he found his communication with Glenna required work.

If you really love your wife, nothing can cost you more than something which puts strain on your relationship. When she said to me: "I know you're my husband, but I've no idea if you're my friend," it devastated me as an Aussie male, and I determined before God that somehow I would win [her] to become my best mate (Smith, magazine, 1980: 8).

Coffee shop ministry

The early 1970s was the era of coffee shops. There was a coffee shop in Frankston, south of Melbourne, which was run by local Christians led by John U'Ren and the

parachurch organisation Scripture Union as a drop-in centre for street people. It was here that Smith, who by this stage had formed a Christian motorcycle riders' group (see Chapter 6) and had bought his first motorcycle, attracted his first 'outlaw' biker convert. U'Ren had arranged for Smith to assist the team with some of their rowdier customers.

It was getting a bit rough at the coffee-shop, with the yobbos teasing and making rough remarks to the girls on the team, so we called Smithy in, and one night he arrived on a Jap bike with 7 or 8 of his mates. Things were okay then, and it was good to have them around (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

A biker, Jimmy, described by U'Ren as typically wild and aggressive, had drifted in to the shop and kept coming back. One night, after talking with Smith and other team members Jimmy decided he wanted to know more about Christ. Before long he wanted to be baptised in the fashion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, i.e. in the nearest water deep enough. Jimmy argued that since he had no links with any church, Smith should baptise him in Port Phillip Bay, which, after some hesitation, Smith did.

It was decided that converts from the coffee shop should be introduced to local churches, and Smith - still caught somewhere between the radical and the conservative - decided to take Jimmy to a small local Brethren congregation. Needless to say, Jimmy looked and felt ill at ease among strictly conservative people in respectable suits and hats, who cast worried glances his way and whispered behind their hands. Jimmy found the service very dreary. When he went forward for communion and took the chalice he coughed and spluttered, and then exited the building. Later Jimmy complained bitterly to Smith that he thought Christians met to celebrate "this guy Jesus", and that it was an insult to remember him with the "cheapest and worst piss [he] ever tasted" (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

This was another turning point for Smith: "Now I could see this kind of church service with new eyes. [To Jimmy] it looked an eccentric and peculiar gathering of people muttering to themselves in a private gloom, before chewing bread and sipping juice" (1987: 133). It was the start of an important lesson about the necessity for a church community that would not alienate converts from secular backgrounds. If the 'gentile' world was to be transformed by Christians like Smith, that world's secular culture and customs would have to be taken seriously. As a transformational leader he needed to raise people's awareness of the necessity for this to happen, and lead the way in making it happen.

Sunbury Festivals

The series of Sunbury Rock Festivals that took place outside Melbourne each January in 1972, 1973 and 1974 were subcultural rites of passage for many baby-boomers. The 1972 festival was especially so, for it was the first major event of its kind in Australia and it carried residual expectations of being an Australian version of North America's Woodstock Festival, held two and a half years before. Woodstock was understood by many as a crucial factor in the 'dawning of a New Age'. John Smith, still employed as an evangelist with the conservative Campaigners for Christ, perceived its significance and was determined to be present with a group of Christians to join in, talk with people and help out where possible. The Salvation Army was going to be present, but mainstream denominations were either ignoring or condemning the planned festival. Smith sought permission to attend as part of his work with CFC, but his superiors did not like the idea of one of their evangelists being present at an event where there would likely be drugs and nudity. Forbidden to attend, he took some holidays and went with Glenna on his own time.

Indeed there were plenty of drugs at 'Sunbury 72', as the festival became known, and much nudity too as people sought escape from heat and dust in the muddy waters of Sunbury Creek. Smith preached love and forgiveness from the banks of the creek to a mixed response of heckling from some of the nude bathers and a clamour to be baptised in the creek by some converts. One of the baptised was a former outlaw biker who, following his immersion, stood in mid-stream and preached about Jesus (Smith, 1987: 146).

At Sunbury Smith also distributed a newspaper, boldly called "Truth" which he had recently founded in partnership with members of a Jesus Movement commune in Spokane, Washington. The giveaway newspaper was to be a feature of the fast-growing Jesus Movement (for details see next chapter), making use of the recently developed offset printing technology. In these days of desktop publishing it is difficult to appreciate how much of an impact these simple newspapers could have, or indeed how expensive they were to produce. To be able to hand out such a publication free at an event like Sunbury was an acceptable way of engaging people in conversation and debate, and gave those who wanted it a way of initiating further contact. The address given was Smith's home.

Sunbury '72 was an exhausting weekend for all participants, but an exhilarating time for both Smith and Glenna, who was pregnant and finding it hard to fit into her first pair of blue jeans. However at last she had been able to share with John an experience in this new world of modern Australia. Through Sunbury Smith learned

that 'unchurched' people were happy to listen to the Christian message preached in their context. His intuitive sense that this was so was vindicated. The pathway to reaching his 'gentiles' was becoming clearer. Furthermore, the confidence engendered by success in this pioneering venture gave him a new aura of authority in the eyes of his supporters.

Out in the cold: a 'liminal' period

No amount of enthusiasm from his supporters pacified Smith's employers, however, who were neither supportive nor admiring of his exploits at Sunbury. "While they thought it wasn't the place for a young evangelist to be, I in my hot-headed innocence didn't think about my job and said I thought it was the very place a young evangelist should be," Smith asserts (interview, 2000a). When he returned to work at CFC after the festival, he was told there was "no future" in their relationship and dismissed with three months' pay.

Sunbury brought a number of issues to a head. Smith admits that prior to the festival, he had been abrasive and ungracious in pressing his new direction, and that communication with his superiors had been getting increasingly strained (1987: 144,148). In addition, the organisation had not approved of the newspaper 'Truth', the front page of which featured a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross with the headline 'Happy Birthday Jesus!'. Smith's superiors at CFC not only considered this to be in bad taste, but were receiving complaints from their supporters. CFC offered to buy out all the copies of the paper, just when Smith was preparing to distribute it at Sunbury. However despite the trouble brewing, from Smith's point of view the dismissal was less than just. He discovered he was pitted against a very powerful group of men. U'Ren states:

"The people in charge of that organisation included many of what I call the Melbourne Evangelical Mafia. They picked, selected and pointed to those they considered to be talent. I was quite concerned about their power" (U'Ren, interview, 2000). These people had carefully selected Smith for his abilities, but were now rejecting him because he no longer fitted their mould.

Smith believes one interstate CFC leader was undermining his position. During a preaching trip to Adelaide he unwittingly became involved in local hostility between evangelicals and neo-Pentecostalism. Some people had come into a neo-Pentecostal experience under Smith's preaching, "not because of what I was saying - [which] had nothing to do with the Pentecostal thing -but because things were becoming so hot and people were launching out in faith and miracles were happening" (interview, 2000a). The adult daughter of the state's CFC leader was already a Pentecostal, to

the disgust of her father. When she heard Smith preach, she claimed there was a dynamic in Smith's preaching which she had never heard in her father's. The father forbade Smith to speak on the subject of the Holy Spirit again in South Australia. When the daughter heard Smith again she noticed the difference and said: "My father has spoken to you, hasn't he?". Smith explained that he must respect authority within the organisation (an attitude he today regrets having taken).

"I know now he (the father) had got into the federal meeting and blackened my name as someone who was dangerously heading toward Pentecostalism," Smith declares. Back in Melbourne, Smith was asked to sign a document for a board meeting stating his interpretation of I Corinthians 12, in which St. Paul writes about charismatic gifts. Smith recounts:

I made an unapologetic response ... which was partly Pentecostal. When a new president of Campaigners was appointed and he started talking about the new broom sweeping things clean, I knew I was in trouble. In a sense, they gave me a chance when they spoke to me before I went to Sunbury pop festival. They were... saying cool it, slow down. My father said to me: you're going too fast, you're not going to take them with you, you're going to end up out. My whole vision was provocative and I didn't get the signal that if I wanted to survive I needed to back off. I had no interest in my own survival. I could see a light at the end of the tunnel and I had to pursue it (Smith, interview, 2000a).

This is typical of the charismatic visionary's attitude. Institutional survival is not even a consideration where it is in conflict with his/her vision. Smith had 'seen the light' and the security of a pay packet meant little to him if he could not pursue it. It is this very singlemindedness in the charismatic leader that inspires devotion in followers, who can usually be relied upon to provide enough in gifts and donations for the leader and his/her dependents.

John U'Ren was also associated with Campaigners for Christ in that period. Working as a parole officer, he was travelling a parallel journey to Smith as far as socio-political questions were concerned.

His view of the gospel was changing in a more wholistic direction. John was asking the tough socio-political questions about the poor in regard to the person of Jesus, so I was not surprised he was in trouble with a quite narrow organisation. When he was dismissed I pleaded for four or five days with the chairperson and CEO for reconsideration. I said that if they would walk with John and let his questions be theirs, Campaigners for Christ would benefit. But the chairperson was rigid and inflexible, a very straight Baptist (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

In retrospect Smith views being dismissed from CFC, and by implication from the conservative evangelical establishment in his home city, as a blessing in disguise. He describes it in anthropological terms as the start of a 'liminal' experience which enabled him to identify with marginalised groups of people who became so important in his story. "I always felt it was a rotten deal I got," he declares. "But now I know that it is why I was able to bond with the cultures that had no congruence with my own history, because in a liminal state, that reaggregation is possible in quite a stunning way." He says now that he wouldn't change his actions. "My only mistake was that I let it hurt me, and it took me decades to recognise that what happened then was in social theoretical terms the best thing that ever happened in my life" (Smith, interview, 1998a).

This understanding of 'liminality' is something Smith has arrived at in recent years, as he studied Turner (1969) on the subject of ritual process. He sees it as a condition that allowed new influences to flourish in his life and thinking. Certainly, to have found himself cast adrift from his own subculture and not yet accepted by any other sub-cultural group seems to have enabled him to bond with marginal and alternative social groups in a way that would not have been possible otherwise.

I found out that liminality is the thing that brings about creativity, and I realised what happened to me was that when I was thrown straight into the midst of that counter-culture ... my taste buds went berserk. It was a classic Turner case of going into a liminal state and reaggregating to a whole new authority and a whole new position. So overnight in a sense I went native. If they'd not cut me off at that point I never would have become a radical. If they'd only known, they could have just suffered with me and put gentle pressure on me and kept loving me, they would have pulled my teeth out (Smith, interview, 2000b).

Hindsight allows marvellous perspective. It is clear that this experience of rejection was crucial in enabling Smith to identify with and respond creatively to the kinds of people who would adopt him as their charismatic and transforming leader. At the time of the dismissal, however, he and Glenna were both devastated. They wept together as they wondered whether John's opportunity to be an evangelist was over, and questioned how they would make ends meet with their mortgage on a house recently bought in Boronia and three small children to feed³.

Being without paid employment tested the Smiths' faith, but made for an exciting time as they patiently waited to see whether their developing work would be supported. Would John still be invited to preach and speak now that he was no

³ The two boys from PNG had left by now.

longer under the banner of CFC? Gradually speaking engagements arose, in coffee shops and other youth-oriented venues. He set up a trust with the help of a friend, although it was some time before gifts started to arrive from people who wanted to support him as an independent evangelist. There was severance pay from CFC, but the Smiths were not allowed to maintain the donor base for John as a CFC employee.

We'd done nothing to build our own support base so were really out there. I was given 24 hours' notice and very minimal pay -- I think \$100 a week for the next three months with the injunction that we were not to use that money for anything other than our own survival: we weren't allowed to set up an alternative organisation. We'd just bought a house, and there was no way we were going to survive on (\$100 a week) anyway. The next edition of *Truth and Liberation*⁴ was laid out all ready to go to the printers, because everyone was asking for it. Glenna, who usually gets more scared of finances than I, said: "John, take it to the printers". I said "Honey, we've got no money". (Glenna) said "Take it to the printers, God is in this thing, so trust Him." I took it to the printers, came back, opened the mail and there were two cheques from anonymous South Australian university students who'd heard me preach there and had no idea I'd been sacked. They'd have to have sent the money before I'd been technically sacked, so it had to be a prevenient move of God for them to have known I needed money. The amount they'd sent was the exact amount to the cent it had cost to print the first round of the paper (\$450.00), and the same amount needed to print the same number of copies of the next edition. So from then on we just trusted the Lord (Smith, interview, 2000b).

This is typical of the way charismatic leaders are supported by gifts from followers. Along with the earlier instances of healing and prophecy it is evidence of the way Smith as a charismatic leader perceived the miraculous as signifying divine encouragement of his vision and mission.

In these early days of independence Glenna did (unpaid) secretarial work and book-keeping, as well as being housekeeper and mother. When the three months' pay from CFC ran out they used up their reserves of food. In a fortnight they received just one dollar. Smith prayed desperately. A letter arrived from some Monash University students, with \$120 cash in it, enough for the mortgage and food bill for a month. As time went by and Smith received increasing invitations and more people were aware of what he was doing, funds began to flow more regularly into the trust account. Despite the controversy of his visit there in 1971, some of Smith's strongest financial support in the early years came from South Australia, due to his impact. With its large numbers of non-conformist Protestants, South Australia shared with Victoria an openness to a more measured and progressive evangelicalism

⁴ The name of the newspaper had been changed to avoid legal problems with the Melbourne tabloid *Truth*.

than was acceptable in the more fundamentalist climes of NSW or Queensland. South Australia was to remain an important support base for Smith.

Eventually John was able to draw a weekly amount roughly equivalent to the basic wage. It was always based on covering needs rather than designed to reflect status. As the work grew, others who joined him in the work were paid more if they had bigger families or it was deemed that they had greater needs. This exemplifies Weber's observation that the charismatic leader not only lives on relatively informal income arrangements, but must always be seen by followers to be motivated by the cause and calling rather than by any personal economic incentive. This principle of income sharing and payment of income according to need essentially continued through Smith's ministry and he is only now, at the age of 60, reconsidering whether he wants it to continue. In the Smiths' case it has meant that although they own a simply furnished house they own little else as they approach old age. Royalties from books were never a substantial income and in today's publishing climate most of Smith's books are out of print, although his 1987 autobiography may soon be republished.

Overview

There were a series of crucial factors in John Smith's remarkable journey from ultra-conservative to radical. These included his choice of a supportive life-partner, his confrontation with peers on the staff of a secular secondary school, his experience as a full-time evangelist on mission in Mt Isa, his attendance at the first Sunbury Festival, and his dismissal from CFC with the liminal period which followed. Having made this perilous journey of cultural transformation, and with his leadership gifts starting to be developed, Smith was in a position to take a commanding role in the radical Christian movement which was about to form around him. Known as the Jesus Movement, it was part of an international religious phenomenon which will now be examined.

CHAPTER 4

The Arrival of a Movement

Jasper (1997) and Touraine (1984) draw attention to the importance of the actor and leader in social movements. As outlined in an earlier chapter, Jasper stresses the importance of a leader's biography and personality, noting the way in which chances convergent in the life events of charismatic figures can play a major role in determining the direction in which movements go. Attention has been given to biographical factors in Smith's formation as a leader. The focus now shifts to the movement in which Smith was a leader, and the traditions from which it emerged. This is crucial for an understanding of Smith's development, for it was the 'Jesus Movement', as it was popularly known, of the 1970s that carried him to significance and prominence, providing a corporate expression of the kind of Christianity to which he was now committed. It was as a leader in this movement that Smith enjoyed his greatest success and influence on the lives of a community of people.

The phrase 'Jesus Movement' has been used by writers such as Theissen (1978) and Horsley (1994) to refer to the New Testament church. Their studies have served to highlight the similarities between that first century movement and the movement now being examined. Theissen shows how Jesus of Nazareth initiated a movement of peripatetic charismatics whose supporters initially remained within the Judaist framework, later taking independent shape as the Christian church (Theissen 1978: 8-27). Horsley too notes the itinerant charismatics, but is more interested in the way in which the first century Jesus Movement took the form of local communities, who were mobilised and inspired by the charismatics (Horsley, 1994: 15-20; 106). The difference between the movements of the first and twentieth centuries lies in their contexts. The first movement had to function within a pre-modern civilisation where Greek culture and thought were still dominant. The 1970s movement was coming to terms with a pluralist post-modern world, in contrast to fundamentalism which relied on modernist certainty for its apologetic and epistemology. Smith believes the Jesus Movement was the first post-modern populist religious movement, as opposed to being simply a revival of neo-Pentecostalism or fundamentalism, which had functioned within a modernist paradigm (Smith, interview, 2000b). He argues that the movement reflected post-modernism's eclecticism, emphasis on experience, and lateral thinking. For the new Jesus Movement the faith had to be true existentially, rather than forensically and ontologically. God was not a being one would ever want to prove so much as experience. For the post-modern mind, the question is not so much whether miracles such as the resurrection are true, it is whether they are

meaningful and relevant. The thrust of the 1970s Jesus Movement's apologetic was that Jesus was both real and relevant. These aspects of the movement were influenced by the broader cultural and intellectual climate of the day, rather than by individuals such as Smith. However the fact that Smith was in tune with and sympathetic to youth subculture meant that he could quickly and naturally embrace the change, and work with it rather than against it. In this process he was demonstrating the transformational leader's skill of being, if not an originator of change, a facilitator and agent of change.

The 1970s 'Jesus Movement' was a christocentric but strongly trinitarian and apocalyptic revitalisation movement that developed in North America as a response to the counter-culture of the 1960s and early 1970s. It flourished and reached its zenith in the early and mid 1970s before being harnessed and in part domesticated by established Christian traditions such as neo-Pentecostalism, Orthodoxy, and the Social Gospel Movement in the late 1970s. John Smith, having entered into his more radical phase, discovered that the American Jesus Movement had aspects in common with a nameless movement which was emerging in Australia. From 1971 he began corresponding extensively with Jesus Movement groups in the U.S., and with individuals such as Professor Jack Sparks, who headed a radical evangelical house-church on Berkeley campus known as the Christian World Liberation Front, founded in 1969. Together with other former leaders of the parachurch group Campus Crusade for Christ, such as Jon Braun and Peter Gillquist, Sparks was reviewing the New Testament Church and seeking to translate it into the twentieth century in California. Meanwhile, in Australia, a Brisbane New Testament Scholar, Dr Athol Gill, and a Sydney Baptist radical, John Hirt, were experimenting with Christian communes: the House of Freedom (Brisbane) and the House of the New World (Sydney). Hirt, a surfer and youth worker in a city where the beach was important to youth culture, had a similar style and rhetoric to Smith: passionate and loud. As tape recordings from the time reveal, he sounded at times almost interchangeable with Smith (Hirt, recording, 1973). The focus of the movement was centred on the charismatic, revolutionary figure of Jesus. Thus its rebellious charismatic preachers, so like Jesus in the minds of many of their young listeners, naturally became central to its growth and development.

Counter-cultural connections

In the United States, the rise of the Jesus Movement coincided with the decline of the counter-culture, at a time when John Lennon was saying that "the dream is over" (Lennon, magazine, 1971). The counter-culture had thrived in places such as California during the early and mid 1960s, but even by the summer of 1967 - the much publicised

'Summer of Love' - the streets of San Francisco were filled less with peace-loving 'flower children' than with drug-affected drop-outs and homeless people. By the late 1960s a number of alternative spiritual groups were emerging, offering acceptance and a place to belong in a period of disillusionment and hopelessness. Charles Manson's Family (1968-9) was one of the more negative examples, and Sparks' Berkeley community one of the more positive. Smith recounts:

In the U.S. the counter-culture was choking to death. By ... 1970 you've got the collapse of hope, because the feeling was that the American establishment was willing to kill its own children rather than suffer any basic change to the materialistic world-view and system. There was an apocalyptic sense that the war was lost; that there was no way that the system was going to change; the [counter-culture] dream was beginning to drown in its own dysfunction. When Nixon was returned with a landslide in 1972, it was just the end of hope for the radical left. The New Left was in disarray, tearing itself apart by then, the early feminists beginning to be dissatisfied (interview, 2000b).

The Jesus Movement met the needs of many at this time, with broken-hearted, often addicted and penniless young people flocking into the 'Jesus communes' that were burgeoning throughout the U.S. These communities offered hope to disillusioned hippies, and they grew by tens of thousands during this period. It was one of the most spectacular religious awakenings in North America in the twentieth century. But while the Jesus Movement arose at a time of disillusionment in the U.S., in Australia its arrival coincided with a rising tide of hope and idealism, with the election of a Labour Government led by the charismatic Gough Whitlam and the consequent abolition of military conscription.

Because we came into our own as a socialist Prime Minister was taking power, [there was] a sense that we were going to take the world. This was not just picking up refugees at the other end of being torn apart by the counter-culture's conflict with mainstream culture. We were in the ascendancy. The Australian movement had much more of a liberation theology, a belief that we could change the world, as Crosby Stills Nash and Young had sung in 1968. We came into this situation with our free newspaper and there's an incredible belief that whatever the system does, we've really got hold of something (Smith, interview, 2000b).

The context gave great scope for a young, hyperactive and charismatic leader like John Smith, himself belatedly riding the counter-cultural wave, steeped in the social justice theology of John Wesley, and with a passion to communicate the more radical aspects of the Christian gospel to people outside the churches. The more positive and idealistic nature of the Australian social and political climate at the time suited Smith's transformational vision. It meant that instead of having to cope with mass disillusionment as the American leaders of the movement had to do, he could

concentrate on holding up the ideals of a more just and compassionate society which came so naturally to him. He was a man not just for his time, but for his place. Before long Smith employed his gifts of oratory and rhetoric in helping lead a Jesus Movement march on Canberra, where several thousand 'Jesus freaks', as the media dubbed them, demonstrated and lobbied outside Parliament House for the Australian movement's ideological platforms such as ecological reform and social justice. In these early stages of the movement Smith was as much a leader of protest as a religious leader.

The Australian movement developed its own theology, which it promoted as "wholistic" (Smith, interview, 1998a) and communitarian. It was strongly evangelical, but on the whole less Pentecostal than much of the U.S. movement and more socially radical. It had intrinsic but unconscious parallels to the liberation theology that was developing in Latin America. Athol Gill's series of circulated papers, later published as *Life on the Road* (Gill, 1989), expounded the New Testament gospels in a radical way, and became the Australian movement's first contextualised theology. It was strong on communality and ecology. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's writings (especially *Life Together* and *The Cost of Discipleship*) were influential for the conduct of relationships and politics within the movement.

Jesus Movement strategies

The strategies of the first century church became the *modus operandi* of the Jesus Movement, both in the U.S. and in Australia. As the New Testament church spread its message through itinerant, charismatic preachers and miracle workers such as Paul of Tarsus and Barnabas, and as the church in previous centuries had seen revitalisation through peripatetic charismatic leaders such as St Francis of Assisi and John Wesley, so now charismatic leaders such as Smith and Hirt (and in the U.S. Duane Pederson, Jon Braun and Peter Gillquist) inspired and mobilised ordinary believers for evangelism and ministry. 'Jesus People' went out into the streets where disaffected youth gathered; they went to rock concerts and festivals, counter-cultural gatherings, bars and clubs. They handed out their free newspapers and sought to engage people in conversation principally about Jesus. They also sought opportunities to nurse the sick and offer shelter to the homeless. They often suffered ridicule and rejection, but drew many converts. If this seems hard to imagine in today's climate, it should be born in mind that the counter-cultural movement of the late 1960s made it relatively fashionable to proselytise alternative lifestyles and philosophies, so that people were less shocked and offended to be approached in public on such matters than they would be today. The name of Jesus was even fashionable for a while in the early 1970s, with pop songs by writers from James

Taylor to Brian Cadd favourably alluding to him. The Jesus 'freaks' would sometimes ask people directly whether they were 'saved', but more often would invite them to consider the person of Jesus as a supernatural friend and role model, or to accept the friendship and hospitality that their communitarian lifestyle offered. The movement was strongly apocalyptic in outlook, so Jesus people often talked about the end times and interpreted current events in an apocalyptic light, which made for interesting discussions and helped people to see the logic of pooling material possessions. John Smith subscribed personally to these aspects of faith and practice, though along with other Australian leaders he had a more sophisticated understanding of apocalyptic theology than many of his more fundamentalist American counterparts.

The Jesus Movement pattern of evangelisation combined elements of people movement mobilisation with the inspirational and strategic centrality of popular oratory, creating an oral mission statement and mythology. Organisational structures were often lacking, but precedent and popular following created a form of charismatic authority via the power of the oral tradition and the tactical role of the charismatic founders (Smith, email communication, 2000).

Foci of mission

There were several major foci in the Australian Jesus Movement's pitch to secular Australia. These included the issue of meaning and purpose in a secular society; the predicament of the marginalised and disenfranchised, especially indigenous Australians; and a direct appeal to the Australian people through the media, rather than through the medium of an institutionalised church. John Smith's transformational influence on the movement can be seen especially in the first two of these foci, with their stress on the higher order values of meaning and purpose and the philanthropic ideals of helping the weak and downtrodden.

The movement's leaders believed that one of the results of Australia having become a secular western nation was that young people were increasingly suffering from a lack of meaning and purpose in their lives. In secondary school seminars that Smith regularly led (see Chapter 7), Smith found that questions of meaning and purpose were consistently raised by teenagers. Finding support in psychotherapy (notably through Viktor Frankl), sociology and history, Smith and his colleagues theorised that faith based in the biblical presentation of Jesus Christ, with his strong call to discipleship, offered a redemptive path to existential meaning and purpose for those of a mind to accept it. If people believed that God as revealed in Christ had created them with loving purpose, then at least they had a reason for being alive. Smith became one of the first to draw public attention to the alarming rate of suicide in young Australian males in the early 1980s (broadcast, 1983; also 1989: 186-91), noting it

was similar to what was happening in other equally secularised countries such as Canada and New Zealand, but different from countries such as the United States, where religion was more foundational to national identity and consciousness. He preached that faith in Jesus made it possible to create and sustain a sense of meaning and purpose in Australian life.

Advocacy of the marginalised and disenfranchised was another major focus for the movement. For John Smith with his Wesleyan background, his love of Henry Lawson (See Chapter 5) and his lifelong empathy for the underdog, this was a natural direction. In addition, as the 1960s and 1970s progressed and the theme of injustice to indigenous people became a prevalent theme, the movement was active in its support of aboriginal rights, particularly land rights (1989: 117ff). 'Jesus People' were regular participants in land rights marches and protests, with Smith and others receiving public attention for taking part in illegal rallies and marches in Brisbane. Youth employment became, and remains, another cause for the movement.

A third focus of the movement was to deliberately seek engagement with the mass media. This will be demonstrated in more detail in Chapter 6, but in general terms the Jesus Movement responded positively to interest from the media and at times courted media exposure intentionally. Smith contends that this was motivated by ideology and compassion, not pragmatism or self-advertisement. It was in part a movement of protest which sought a platform from which to critique Australian society and then offer Jesus Christ as the key to solving problems which faced not just individuals but the community.

Jesus belonged to the people, not to the archbishops or the religious bureaucracies. From rock music to talk shows the media were the eyes, ears and mouth of the popular culture. We were intensely centrifugal in our focus and it was the desire by every means to make Jesus known in public as a corrective to Australia's unfortunate experience of institutionalised religion, which motivated our media exploitation (Smith, email communication, 2000).

This was made easier by the movement's unconventional standing in the community, and by the novelty value of groups within the movement such as God's Squad Motorcycle Club. They were 'good copy' as far as journalists were concerned, and likely to articulate their message in the vernacular and in ways that were refreshingly incautious. The curious media reported not just on sensational aspects of groups like God's Squad, but on the substantive issues of the movement's agenda as well. "The persona of Jesus, his message to the marginalised and the common people, lent itself to a populist critique of institutions, both sociopolitical and religious" (Smith, personal

communication, 2000). The issues through which they were likely to gain media exposure included youth alienation and suicide, land rights, homelessness and poverty. Smith and others made use of the latest social research and statistics to arm themselves for media interviews. "Ministry to the fringes of the society drew much attention from the media, which were intrigued by the combination of the 'common touch' and our educated analysis of the issues" (Smith, personal communication, 2000). The combination of charismatic appeal and transformational critique in leaders like Smith and Hirt gave the movement the kind of spokespersons that made this strategy effective. If the average priest or minister had attempted it, it may not have been so effective. Smith influenced the Victorian and South Australian sections of the movement quite markedly, both in terms of their character and direction. In these states he was the movement's 'face' as far as many of the general public were concerned.

Though the movement was often critical of institutional churches it never renounced them, and sought to be gracious in dealings with them, taking to heart the maxim of Martin Luther that the Church "may be a whore, but she's still my mother" (Smith, interview, 2000b). The mainstream churches quickly learned that people such as Smith and Hirt could be enlisted as useful allies. They were intelligent, orthodox and able to communicate with young people in ways that clergy for the most part could not. This symbiosis was helped through the movement's relationship, from very early in its development, with Roman Catholic and Anglican schools, where figures such as Smith were welcome and successful as visiting speakers. The capability and appeal of people like Smith and Hirt influenced the movement toward a strategy of working through schools wherever possible.

Smith quickly became a regular speaker at university debates, both as a speaker in 'missions' run by campus religious groups and as a representative of the Christian viewpoint in secular debates. Smith realised that the intelligentsia had been ignored in the church's mission as much as the marginalised, and outreach to the university community became another of the movement's strategies. He found himself publicly debating heavyweights such as the utilitarian philosopher and ethicist Peter Singer, and sceptic and humanist James Gerrard.

Worship life

The worship life of the Jesus Movement, which took place mostly in communal houses, tended to be informal and in the vernacular, both in terms of language and dress. In the early 1970s, in Australia as in the U.S., it pioneered the use of electric guitars and drums -- the instruments of the popular music of the day -- in worship,

something that seems commonplace today but was revolutionary in terms of church culture at the time. Followers were determined to worship in forms of expression that would not alienate new 'unchurched' believers. The importance of 'fellowship', the informal fraternising between Christians, was stressed as a valid part of regular worship. People needed time to 'rap' with each other and 'share' their stories. During a visit in 1973 to the Episcopalian Church of the Redeemer in Houston, Texas, with its 500-strong commune, Smith experienced liturgical worship in a positive way for the first time. His upbringing had conditioned him to be sceptical about Anglicanism, yet there he saw how liturgy could compliment radical community living. He noted that it need not be a barrier to the communication of the gospel, but could be an aid to communication with young people. Though he did not move in this direction himself for many years, the experience sowed a seed which lay dormant and in the mid-1980s resulted, partly through his association with Melbourne's Anglican Archbishop David Penman, in him seriously considering the possibility of ordination as an Anglican.

The counter-cultural emphasis on love and the beauty of creation, though not its use of mind-altering drugs, resonated with Smith's wholistic outlook. This outlook in turn owed much to his Methodist upbringing, his creation theology, his childhood enthusiasm for flora and fauna, and to the compassion for people in pain he had learned in growing up. Photographs of Smith at this period reflect the counter-cultural influence: long hair, beard and gaudily floral shirts. The fashions of the early 1970s often seemed serendipitously to match the preferences of a movement which harked back to the ideal of the early church: beards and sandals for men; long flowing dresses and hair and little make-up for women. When the Glamrock and Punk fashions arrived in the mid and late seventies, 'Jesus people' quickly started to look dated. Smith was spared the indignity of looking old-fashioned by virtue of the fact that, as president of God's Squad, he quickly adopted the vestment of a fully-fledged outlaw biker, a look that is standard and has changed over the decades only with the gradual greying of its members' luxuriant facial hair.

Revival or revitalisation?

Further passage of time will help church historians ascertain whether the worldwide Jesus Movement of the 1970s was simply another religious revival movement, or something more. John Smith argues that the movement was a creative revitalisation movement, in that it did not simply 'revive' an existing religious tradition but developed a new tradition and theology which revitalised the contemporary church and impacted the culture of the societies in which it took place (interview, 2000a). Certainly the movement differed from a typical evangelical revival in that it

developed some radical methods and outlooks, such as a theology of ecology and an early (if at first unconscious) expression of liberation theology.

Whatever happened to the Jesus Movement of the 1970s? American church growth theorists often make the assumption that it grew gradually into the 'mega-church' movement of the 1980-90s, encompassing a loose network of very large independent, theologically conservative evangelical and Pentecostal churches (Wagner, 1998). However, although mega-church denominations such as the Vineyard Fellowship benefited much from the involvement of former members of the Jesus Movement, they were not on the whole founded by Jesus people and they demonstrated some very important differences. While the Jesus Movement was aggressively outward-looking and outward moving in its mission, taking its message into the streets because it had no attractive facilities to which it could invite large numbers of people, the mega-churches have always functioned on the opposite principle, of leasing large premises and attracting thousands to come in and worship. While it is true that some mega-church gurus of today, such as Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago, or Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in Orange County, California, began their ministries in the Jesus Movement days, few of the Jesus Movement's charismatic originators have embraced mega-church. Among the Australian leaders, John Hirt is now a Uniting Church social justice activist in Sydney, and Athol Gill died in 1996 while leading the radical House of the Gentle Bunyip community in Melbourne, where he had been since the 1970s. Leading American figures such as Sparks, Gillquist, Braun and Pederson are in the Antiochan Orthodox Church in the U.S., where they operate for the most part in a similar manner to the Jesus Movement, setting up small parish bases in impoverished locations and going into the streets to preach the gospel and minister to the needy. John Smith seems to have little but contempt for mega-church priorities and strategies, giving the example of a mega-church near his home in Kentucky spending 90 million dollars on building extensions.

Imagine if you spent even \$30 million on releasing workers, given a small city (like Lexington) with 250,000 people, what you could do to turn that city upside-down. But there you've spent it on these buildings (Smith, interview, 2000a).

The Jesus Movement in its original centrifugally focused communal form still exists here and there, particularly in America, but in truth the answer to the question 'Whatever happened to the Jesus Movement?' must be that the Jesus Movement developed in a host of directions. Some of its people found a place to live out their vision through established churches; some branched off into the house church movement; some formed independent churches which became less communal with

time; some formed large bureaucratic church and welfare organisations such as the Jesus People U.S.A. in Chicago; and many joined the neo-Pentecostal movement, including some of the mega-church expressions. The movement's influence filters into each of these ecclesiastical forms through the participation of former 'Jesus People', and also continues through those like Smith, whose passion for preaching and applying the gospel radically lives on.

Smith mourns the passing from prominence of the movement that gave him a framework to express his convictions and the opportunity to ride the crest of a wave through being a leader of a popular movement. He has yet to find a denomination or another movement that satisfies his longings to be part of something resembling the New Testament church, with its fresh theology and radical communitarian practice. He is fascinated and impressed by the Eastern Orthodox tradition which so many of his American colleagues in the Jesus Movement eventually entered, on the grounds that it is the only church truly continuous with that of the New Testament. However it is difficult to envisage Smith following them into such an authoritarian ecclesiastical structure, despite his increasing regard for formal ritual process. Struggling on with his own small, independent church (see Chapter 7) he looks back with nostalgia to the days when searching for meaning and purpose was high on the public and social agenda, and when young people *en masse* were rejecting cynicism in favour of openness toward answering the 'big' questions of life.

CHAPTER 5

Cultural and Theological Factors behind the Charisma

The Jesus Movement in Australia, with which John Smith was so closely linked, developed its own cultural and theological perspective. This owed much of its character to the Australian context and to the particular charismatic leaders who imposed their vision on the movement in this country. John Smith, with his developing media profile (see Chapter 6), soon gained recognition with the general public as well as his followers in the Jesus Movement. He became a popular communicator and broadcaster on social, moral and spiritual issues. In this chapter I examine some of the cultural factors that affected Australia's developing spirituality, understanding of and adaptation to which helped fit Smith for his charismatic role. I then examine some of the major intellectual and theological influences which affected Smith's development in a transformational direction.

The character of Australian Spirituality

For Smith the charismatic leader and communicator, knowing where the heart and soul of his fellow Australians lay was of crucial importance. His youthful fascination with North America was replaced by a passion for his own nation's history, politics, and geography. He became a devotee of the nation's art and literature, and developed his love for the land itself with its flora and fauna. He asked himself questions about the nation's people and their beliefs: What was the character of spirituality in Australia? What had been the influences behind its development, and in what ways had its development been unique? What had been the major factors in Australian life that had to be taken into account in any mission to the country's 'gentiles'? Consideration of some of the most important influences on the character of Australian spirituality shows why Smith was well qualified to become an authentic Australian voice for Christianity.

Secularism is well established in Australia. Professor Colin Williams, Dean of the School of Theology at Yale University, described Australia as the most secularised of all Western countries (in Millikan, 1982: 39). Without the weight of tradition carried by Europe or the strength of the church in North America from its origins, secularisation progressed further in Australia. However while Australians have not generally identified with the institutional church, a study of our literature and folklore (see Appendix 1) shows that Australians have always highly regarded Jesus of Nazareth, if not as a divine atoning saviour, then as an ethical role model and sign of God's identification with the ordinary 'battler'. Often Australians rejected institutional Christianity because they

perceived the church as having failed to reflect Jesus as they understood him. Campbell asserts that Australians tended to seek God not out of any hope for heaven but in terms of present needs (1999: 184). John Smith agrees that “the Australian spirit is one of the most secular on the face of the earth” (interview, 1998a). He accepts however that even our secularism has strong elements of Christian tradition in it. His evangelism has appealed to Australians’ search for meaning and purpose rather than to hope of heavenly reward. He preaches God’s rule of justice and righteousness, to be sought ‘on earth as it is in heaven’, as the answer to the needs of secular Australians. He ridicules popular ‘lifeboat theology’ that offers heavenly salvation without due regard to what happens in this world. Smith’s attitude here typifies his transformational approach, where moral ideas are proclaimed and higher order goals such as justice and equality are sought. His approach struck a chord with many Australians who did not respond to more conservative theological approaches to evangelism.

Australians’ **anti-intellectualism** is reflected in their spirituality. There has not been a substantial theological tradition in this country, even within universities. Church colleges have until recently stressed vocational training over intellectual rigour. Our theologians have been generally imported from abroad or trained abroad, resulting in a continuation of derivative traditions rather than an indigenous theology. Millikan draws attention to Australians’ impatience with abstract thought and preference for practical solutions. He believes those seeking to interest others in the Christian gospel in Australia should not rely on argumentation but instead on demonstrating the offer of meaning and purpose for living, and on preaching justice and peace (Millikan, 1982: 36). The Jesus Movement in Australia emphasised such things. Smith was in the vanguard of this thinking from the early 1970s, seeking to evangelise through offering a framework for values rather than through intellectual argumentation. Smith is a self-taught intellectual, unafraid to engage in debate with intellectuals from Peter Singer to Bishop Spong, but his view has always been that more is achieved in Christian mission by offering people meaning, purpose and encouragement for living than through trying to debate them into belief.

The myth of **egalitarianism** is present in Australian spirituality. Russel Ward described in the 1940s the “legend” that Australians had developed about themselves. It holds that “Jack is not only as good as his master but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better, and he is a great knocker of eminent people unless they happen to be sporting heroes or distinguished by physical prowess” (Ward, 1989: 1,2). This belief is reflected in the alienation Australians have felt from imported religious structures and traditions with their pomp, ceremony, hierarchies and titles. Millikan comments that religious leaders in Australia have to prove themselves ‘good blokes’ before they can hope for a

popular audience (1982: 35). Part of Smith's popularity, particularly with the media, was due to his lack of ecclesiastical office, dress or title and his colloquial expression. His authority rested on his personal charisma and effective communication with unchurched Australians, rather than on rational/legal position, in Weber's terms. Though Smith is theologically orthodox, he appeals because of his 'good bloke' image and his transformational vision of a better and fairer, and in that sense more godly, Australia. Smith sought to capitalise on Australians' goodwill toward the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, who remained relatively independent of the religious hierarchies of his day and mixed more with the ordinary and the marginalised than with the rich and powerful. Associating with contemporary 'publicans and sinners' in mostly secular settings, Smith matched the Australian preference for egalitarian spokespersons and leaders. In his work with God's Squad Motorcycle Club he noted local reluctance to give club leaders the grand status and absolute power they have in American clubs, and adapted the role of club president to our more egalitarian climate.

Anti-authoritarianism became part of the Australian character from convict days, and is reflected in anti-clerical attitudes first encountered by the chaplain to the First Fleet, Richard Johnson, in 1788 (Clark, 1963: 23-5). Author John Hannaford articulates how the most popular religious figures in Australia are frequently those perceived by people to have been rejected by the religious establishment.

Deep in the Australian's roots is a sense of having been rejected by the authorities and institutions. Therefore the people who will win a hearing are those seen to have suffered, like them, at the hands of the institutions. The only people breaking ground in evangelism are those who are seen as being apart from the bureaucratic authoritarian church mould. Thus someone like Ted Noffs is loved in proportion to how much he is disliked by the straight church (Hannaford, address, 1986).

It has been seen that Smith now considers his dismissal from Campaigners for Christ in 1972 to be the best thing that happened to him professionally because it enabled him to bond and identify with the values and spiritual aspirations of unchurched subcultures. Smith's rejection by religious 'powers that be' in the early 1970s thus accounts in part for his charismatic attribution among people alienated from conventional religious expression.

Wowserism, a negative form of puritanism or asceticism, has affected the development of Australian spirituality.⁵ Found in both Protestant and Catholic traditions, it has alienated generations of Australians from organised religion. Wherever our hedonism has been strongest (e.g. Sydney) there has been a

⁵For a discussion on the nature and origins of wowserism, see Appendix 1.

correspondingly strong puritanical reaction in the churches. As a result of wowserism, Christianity for many became identified with a series of prohibitions: 'Thou shalt not' drink or gamble, in the case of Protestants, or indulge in sexual pleasure, in the case of Catholics. The tragedy of wowserism, according to Millikan, is that it represents an inessential element of Christianity and one that does not commend the faith to contemporary Australians (1982: 35). He believes Christianity is weakened when reduced to an ethic for controlling popular behaviour, and Australians tend to be dismissive of doctrines which deny the joys and satisfactions of earthly life. John Smith has, accordingly, tended to place the emphasis in his evangelism on Christ's promise of more abundant life being true for this life as well as in heaven. He knows that transcendence is only good news in Australian culture where it brings with it more authentic and satisfying life in the present. In his celebration of the joys of Australian life, and in his identification with one of the most hedonistic subcultures (the bikers), Smith sought to break the stereotype of the wowserish Protestant minister, believing it to be contrary to the example of Christ. He prepared sermons in hotel bars, testing each statement on those present, to "create a context of liminality and vulnerability in preparation," and to "root the communication in market-place realities" (Smith, 1996: 5)⁶. Though God's Squad would refuse alcohol in public, lest they be a 'stumbling block' to any alcoholics present, few Squad members were teetotalers. Smith, who enjoys wine and smokes a pipe occasionally, certainly does not preach abstinence and in fact has occasionally outraged conservatives by preaching tolerance for heavy drinking among aborigines on the basis of Proverbs 31: 6-7. At biker functions he and other Squad members deliberately turn their backs on striptease performances, but more as a protest against the exploitation of women than as a puritanical response to sexuality.

Conservatism invariably characterised the role of religion in Australia. Richard Campbell believes that the strange, frightening new land, so different from Europe, demanded that there be symbols of familiarity and security evident, and that the churches were under pressure from the start to provide these symbols (Campbell, 1977:182). While Christianity made no clear doctrinal contribution to Australians' understanding of their national identity (as it had for Americans in the U.S.), the churches did provide a stable value system which underpinned social and political life, and reminded Australians of the cultures from which the nation derived. This tended to act as a restraint on radical thought until the 1960s and the social revolution that led to the Whitlam Government of 1972-5. The post-war 'baby-boomer' generation discarded much of the Christian value system that it had received second or third-hand

⁶ This constant testing of ideas and expression fits with Bennis and Nanus' description of transformational leadership (see Chapter 1, page 19).

from its forebears. Smith intuitively chose to work outside the denominational churches with their baggage of social conservatism, and instead to target 'babyboom' Australians who had rejected organised religion. The fact that he was among the first Christian leaders to do this, and was perceived as bold and radical in doing so, added to his charismatic aura and to the transformational nature of his leadership. Rather than being perceived as part of the conservative reaction to the Whitlam reformation, as many Protestant leaders were, Smith was seen by his followers as a Christian expression of the new wave of change, seeking more equal opportunity for Australians, irrespective of their background or their gender, and seeking peace rather than war in Vietnam.

Sectarianism characterised Australian spirituality until the 1970s and the social revolution that brought Smith to prominence. Protestant and Catholic traditions reflecting mostly English and Irish migrants competed for influence with a mutual antipathy born of the divisions and disputes of the old world. Thornhill notes:

Rival Christian groups developed distinctive ideologies which set their members in bitter confrontation with each other. All too often they lived on slogans and prejudice rather than finding a spirit of Christian fellowship in which they could acknowledge all they shared in common and a respectful relationship in which they could explore the nature of their differences in the light of the principles they shared (Thornhill, 1992: 184).

While sectarianism has further receded with the growth of ecumenism and the breakdown of the Irish/English dualism as a result of multiculturalism, the heritage of sectarian attitudes lives on in some of our religious structures. John Smith had an advantage in being perceived as separate from the old sectarian frameworks of denominationalism. He has assiduously avoided formal associations with even his Methodist links through the Uniting Church. This was important in his credentials for leading a movement of baby-boomers, with their entrenched alienation from institutional religion. Whereas even a close associate of Smith's such as John U'Ren was tagged in the Jesus Movement as an establishment figure because he remained Methodist (U'Ren, interview, 2000), Smith was perceived along with his countercultural colleagues as being free, radical and therefore conceivably prophetic. Without such a perception his charismatic appeal would have been hindered.

Sectarianism influenced the nation's broader social development. Australia's education systems, heavily bureaucratised at State level, reflected the rivalry between Protestant and Catholic groups and the need to balance the influence of each. Manning Clark writes that it was "on the altar of varying religious truth as seen by Anglican, Catholic and

Presbyterian that secular education was sacrificed" in the earliest colonies, while in dissenting South Australia, by contrast, "the numerical weakness of Anglicans and Catholics allowed religious education to be sacrificed on the altar of secular education," with the creation in 1851 of an exclusively secular board of education (Clark, 1963: 100). It was in South Australian state secondary schools in the early 1980s that John Smith developed the non-sectarian 'values education' that enabled him to provide input into many thousands of secondary schools around Australia under the secular pretext of social studies. However before he could enter any South Australian state school Smith needed the agreement of every recognised denomination operating in the area. The fact that he was able to gain such agreement in every area of Adelaide but one speaks of his ability to bridge sectarian sentiments in the exercise of transformational leadership. His success in South Australia opened up opportunities for 'values education' around the nation.

Evangelicalism has always been influential in the development of Australian spirituality. The earliest convict chaplains and first clergy were nearly all evangelical Anglicans, following the biblical imperative to go into all the world to preach the gospel. Evangelical groups are found today in all mainstream Christian denominations bar Orthodox and Roman Catholic. They dominate Baptist and Pentecostal denominations, and make up a sizeable proportion of Anglican and Uniting Church members, especially in Sydney. Evangelicals range from liberal to conservative. In recent times the star of conservative evangelicalism has been rising, and most evangelical theological and bible colleges are, currently, relatively conservative. This is part of the polarisation which Campbell called a "pervasive theological mood", evident "right across the denominations" (Campbell, 1977:183).

John Smith's origins were deep in evangelical religion and subculture. A Methodist preacher's son, his conversion at 27 was not to another religion, but to a new and transforming openness to the secular world and its culture. He did not seek to leave the evangelical fold, though he finds himself progressively distanced from its more conservative end as he pursues what Jesus of Nazareth called the "weightier matters of justice, love and faithfulness" (Matthew 23: 23). For example, as one of Australia's foremost evangelists he is unable to speak at Christian Union functions at Sydney University. This is due to his refusal to sign a doctrinal basis as demanded by the Union's conservative evangelical hegemony, on the basis that the various categories of belief demanded do not include love for God or neighbour. "There is a need for us to question whether orthodoxy or orthopraxy can ever stand alone without heresy being embraced," he writes of conservative evangelicalism (Smith, 1996: 2). Smith today describes himself as a "critical realist evangelical", adding that he wonders whether he can still call himself an evangelical when he seriously doubts some of the major propositions in current evangelical theology (Smith, interview, 1998a). Though some evangelical

purists may reject him Smith is still generally understood to operate within the broader evangelical tradition of the Christian church in Australia. However as a charismatic leader Smith needs to remain free from authoritarian dogmatism which hovers over much Australian evangelicalism. Evangelicalism which does not overtly promote higher order ideals such as love, freedom, acceptance, and inclusiveness will always tend to alienate a transformational leader as being moralistic rather than moral.

Secularism, anti-intellectualism, egalitarianism, anti-authoritarianism, wowsersism, conservatism, sectarianism, and evangelicalism have each been major factors at play in the formation of characteristically Australian spirituality. As has been seen, each has to some extent been relevant to the development and success of the ministry and leadership of John Smith. For his leadership to be transformational it had to overcome or come to terms with each of these factors, in order to keep higher order ideals before the eyes of followers. For his leadership to be charismatic, it needed to appeal to his followers as a way forward within this cultural setting.

Demographic and social realities

In addition to the cultural and religious factors impinging on Australian spirituality there are other demographic and social realities which influenced the nation's spiritual character. Geography, migration, aboriginality, leisure and affluence each played a part in creating a spiritual climate where the leadership of John Smith was especially relevant.

The isolated **geography** of Australia results in many Australians experiencing a vague sense of contingency about being here, and a sense of separation from cultural roots. Tony Kelly asks whether this helps to explain our fatalism, materialism, and contempt for protocol and ritual which make little sense when removed from their original context (ed. Malone, 1988: 57). Australia may be likened to an isolated garden where transplanted cultural and spiritual seeds from around the world promise eventual indigenous growth. Smith, in refusing a traditional clerical role in favour of the most basic ecclesiastical function of apostle to a unique society, embraced Australian culture as few missionaries did before him. His acceptance as such by many spoke of his credibility as a transformational leader who was reinterpreting Christianity for a new situation.

The harshness of the island continent, with its old and thin soils and its treacherous climate affected our spiritual development. Somehow the Lord seemed more mysterious in his ways here than in America and Europe, less predictably reliable and

less rewarding of conventional piety. This was, in Lawson's words, "the worst dried up and God-forsaken country" (in Thornhill, 1992: 7). It was a place where mateship was often seen as more reliable than divine providence. How are we to live in such a land in a way which nurtures our spirits rather than withers them? Seeking harmony with creation becomes the contact point with God for many, and redemption is pursued through a reconnecting with the land and the sea. Television naturalist Harry Butler saw himself as a priest of the Australian landscape, "showing [Australians] a new way of living with its mysteries" (in Millikan 1981: 67). For an Australian Christian voice to be authentic, it must credibly be able to bear witness to experiencing God in the extremes and exigencies of life in such a land, at the point where pious Europeans and Americans might have given up and lost faith.

John Smith presents as well qualified for such authenticity. In contrast to many religious leaders he is an outdoors person, an enthusiastic hunter and fisherman with a knowledge of the continent born of 30 years' motorcycling around it and a lifetime of cataloguing its flora and fauna. Having felt the dehydrating power of the semi-desert, he knows the cruelty and power of the 'dead heart'. For decades Smith publicly valued what indigenous people have to teach the nation about relationship with the land. As Australians increasingly include the land's extensive coasts in their mythology, Smith relates as one who has fished and swum in coastal waters around the continent. Furthermore, Smith's gospel is appropriately incarnational. In every person he seeks to connect with the humanity that Christ shared, and to 'incarnate' the gospel through mobilising followers to take the message to urban and rural people in pubs, festivals, prisons and educational institutions. In many ways he is a spiritual man to match the aspirations, myths and self-understanding of his generation of Australians.

The importance of English and Irish **migration** for Australian spirituality has been noted. Waves of immigration from Baltic states, southern Europe, Asia and the Middle East have diluted forever the Catholic-Protestant dominance with significant numbers of Greek Orthodox, Muslims and Buddhists. In addition since the 1960s there has been growing interest in Eastern mysticism among Australians. Already the Anglo-Irish perspective on Australian religion, still relevant when histories such as Clark's were being written 20-30 years ago, appears increasingly dated. Smith, through his life in cosmopolitan Melbourne and work in schools and welfare programmes for the unemployed, had wide contact with second-generation Australians of most backgrounds. Though in America for much of the controversy surrounding Pauline Hansen's anti-immigration policies, he was vociferously opposed to her policies during his regular visits home. Though he enjoyed the peak

of his charismatic power in the old Anglo-Irish Australia, Smith appears likely to find a continuing role as a transformational 'change agent' in the new multi-cultural nation.

Indigenous issues have influenced Australia's spiritual climate in the last thirty years. Aboriginal people, until quite recently considered doomed to extinction through assimilation, are now increasingly understood, in the words of broadcaster Caroline Jones, as "the steady beating heart at the centre of our Australian identity" (in Thornhill, 1992: 207). From a population of 79,300 in 1961, Aborigines are now more than four times that number. Smith has been an active advocate of aboriginal land rights and social reform since the 1970s, when such causes were still far from fashionable and were largely ignored by the majority of church people. With others from the Jesus Movement he was arrested in Brisbane in the 1970s for publicly demonstrating for the land rights cause. He campaigned for restitution to the 'stolen generation' of aboriginal children in his 1988 book *Advance Australia Where?* (Smith, 1988: 124-131). He was threatened with violence in the early 1980s for preaching in South Australian 'outback' towns against injustice to aborigines. His interest in anthropology as a field for doctoral studies came about partly through an intense inquiry into Aboriginal anthropology and history. He has long been a critic of paternalistic evangelical attacks on aboriginal spirituality.

These issues are significant for the study of an Australian religious leader. The presence of indigenous people among us presents for the Australian conscience a constant "challenge to the brutal greed that all but destroyed them", according to Tony Kelly (ed. Malone, 1988:56). It also places white Australian Christianity in the context of a national human history of more than 30,000 years with a creation-based spirituality focused in the ecology of the land.⁷ Aboriginal presence raises questions to be taken seriously by those with a claim to Christian leadership: How do we contextualise the faith in a harsh land which has confounded so many European and American assumptions about God's dealing with people? How does the Aboriginal concept of "sacred sites" affect Christian understanding of sacred versus secular, and whether it is right to continue exploiting the earth for material gain? What insights does the 'dreaming' mythology contribute to Christian understanding of creation and redemption? Smith's early and continuing involvement in these issues stands to his credit, and as an indication of his transformational gift in championing an idealistic cause before it entered mainstream concern.

⁷ Only in the last thirty years has a truly significant indigenous expression of Christianity and leadership been established both within and outside the mainstream denominations (Harris, 1990: 880-886).

Leisure and affluence have also been factors in determining Australian spirituality. Our high standard of living and abundant leisure provisions⁸ enable us to explore our intuitive feeling for creation as a contact point with the numinous, through journeys around the continent, to the 'dead heart' or along the coasts. We also have plenty of time and money for sport, with test matches and grand finals taking on a quasi-religious function with the ritual and devotion they engender in many fans. Smith's public image of the travelling biker-priest, and his often expressed enthusiasm for the recreational opportunities offered by various Australian lifestyles, speaks of his relevance as a leader from among the people, a spiritual communicator who relates effectively to Australians in their leisure and affluence.

In examining some of the factors that have influenced the development of various aspects of Australian Christian spirituality, it can be seen that there is an increasingly distinctive Australian expression of belief, and that Australians will not necessarily respond to expressions and methods of evangelism and Christian mission in the same manner as Europeans or Americans. Christianity is more likely to make progress in this country through authentically Australian voices and initiatives: communicators and carers who understand their nation's distinctive culture and history. John Smith is such a figure, and this in part explains his success in bringing the Christian gospel to bear on the lives of unchurched Australians. I shall now examine some of the specific intellectual and theological influences on Smith's individual development as a charismatic and transformational religious leader and communicator.

Smith's theological development

Obviously, Smith's thinking and leadership were influenced to a great degree by the life and teaching of that best known of all charismatic and transformational movement leaders, Jesus of Nazareth, as set out in the New Testament gospels. He was also influenced by the Apostle Paul, whose concept of a mission to the gentiles became the pattern for much of John Smith's self-understanding in trying to reach out to marginal and unchurched groups with the Christian gospel. To some extent he was also shaped, as has been seen, by the ministry and example of his father, Ken Smith, and by memories of his grandfather's open-air evangelism. There were many other influences and factors in his development. Smith's early interest in John Wesley and

⁸ Foreigners are often amazed to hear that Australians receive not only 4-5 weeks' paid annual leave but regular long service leave as well.

his leadership of the socio-religious movement of Methodism has already been noted. I will now emphasise the aspects of Wesley's theology and practice which were particularly relevant and influential for the transformational direction which his ministry developed. Other influences included Francis Schaeffer, Henry Lawson, Manning Clark, and Smith's interests in Liberation Theology, Anthropology and Missiology.

Wesley's theology and practice.

Though he is widely known in Australia as a Protestant Christian, Smith claims to have always felt rather hostile to continental Calvinism, which places him slightly at odds with many of his fellow evangelicals. "It (Calvinism) robs the gospel of much of its tradition and I think it was an almost totally compliant servant of the Enlightenment" (Smith, interview, 1998a). On the other hand John Wesley, with his Church of England background and love of patristic theology, had what Smith calls, employing a term which became a catchcry for the Jesus Movement in Australia, a much more "wholistic" (interview, 1998a) understanding of the gospel. Wesley's theology was creational, focusing less than Calvinism did on original sin, and more on the grace of God in restoring blessing on humankind. As an Anglican Wesley based his epistemology on the authority of the Bible, the tradition of the church, and the rational use of the mind. However as Smith says, Wesley "added to that the strong proviso that one could only properly interpret the text of the Bible when one was in dynamic relationship with the author, by the power of the Holy Spirit" (interview, 1998a). That is, religious experience became the fourth key arbiter in determining Wesley's epistemology, giving what Smith believes is the best possible balance. It was an wholistic balance that saw Wesley stress the importance of practical service to the poor, with his interest in medicine and insistence that Methodist preachers carry wherever they went a medical textbook and free medicines; and the beginnings of the trade union movement in Methodism. Likewise Wesley's concern for communicating with children on matters of faith contrasted strongly with some contemporary Calvinist attitudes. In addition, for Wesley both the teaching and the ritual of the church had to be accessible to people of all ages and stations in life.

There are aspects of Methodism with which Smith is less comfortable, such as the holiness movements which reflect Wesley's pre-Methodist background. Wesley believed it was possible for the believer to reach a state of sinless perfection or maturity, citing 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 as an example of what might be meant by the idea of perfection. There developed on the margins of Methodism some extreme holiness cults, for which Wesley is often blamed. Smith, with his compassion for the weak and the outcast and his painful awareness of his own shortcomings, has always

felt uncomfortable with this part of the Methodist tradition. Quoting his father in its defence, however, he says: "I wish Christians were even half as troubled about our sinful imperfection as they were troubled about sinless perfection" (interview, 1998a).

Wesley's stress on teaching, preaching and hymnody.

Methodism's *raison d'être* had been John Wesley's discovery that Anglican churches were closed to evangelical preaching and to some forms of expression effective in communicating with ordinary working people. Wesley, who spoke in a deliberately plain and at times confrontational manner, was banned from preaching in English parish churches for ignoring this formidable cultural barrier. When Wesley took to horseback and peripatetic preaching in fields and factory yards in order to reach labourers, he followed the tradition of earlier reformers such as Francis of Assisi, and was a precursor to the kind of open-air campaigning undertaken by John Smith's grandfather in factory yards at lunch-hour. When John Smith took to travelling vast distances on a motor-cycle to meet people in pubs and festivals, the family tradition was being carried on in an (unconsciously) Wesleyan style. Smith accepts this interpretation, while also emphasising that from 1970 onwards he was never denominationally Methodist (interview, 1998a). However the Jesus Movement with which he was associated bore similarity to Methodism in these ways. Smith asserts:

They [the Wesleys] sat down and said 'We have a movement that is working amongst illiterate or at least non-academic people but these people have the capacity before Almighty God to be every bit as astute in the matters of the Word and of theology as any bishop' (Smith, interview, 1998a).

Wesley indeed opined that if his preachers did not know more of the Bible and the character of God than the average Anglican bishop he would not commission them to preach. With his brother Charles, Wesley set out to educate his flock through the formation of small local societies and through the writing of hymns to tunes sung popularly in public houses (the churches of England and Scotland at that time restricted singing in worship mainly to the chanting of psalms). Jesus Movement songs of the 1970s bore some resemblance to Methodist hymns in that they contained serious and careful theology sung to popular tunes in the hope that ordinary people's hearts would begin to resonate with Christian doctrine as they learned their catechism through song. Like Wesleyan hymns, the Jesus Movement songs were trinitarian and wide-ranging in theme, in contrast to many contemporary evangelical and Pentecostal choruses.

Wesley's wide-ranging methods of ministry

Wesley went into the fields and byways reluctantly at first, encouraged by the experience of his charismatic colleague and associate George Whitefield, an orator with the power to project his voice and personality in the fashion of a great Shakespearian actor. Though Wesley had no such delivery, Whitefield persuaded him that since the industrial revolution was taking thousands of people outside the range of Church of England parishes, and since the two of them had been banned from most parish churches anyway, Wesley ought to try open-air preaching. Wesley discovered that even without Whitefield's dramatic presence he could draw audiences of thousands. Wesley's charisma lay in his passion, drive and clear communication. When Whitefield left for America, Wesley continued with outdoor preaching and found he was able to build on Whitefield's beginnings. England gradually became his 'parish' and he was to spend the rest of his life moving around the country. John Smith has spent much of his life travelling around the country to preach and speak, and admits to having been influenced by Wesley's open-air methods and itinerant lifestyle. His willingness to follow Wesley's example was another crucial element in enabling him to develop his own charismatic gifts and exercise a broad transformational influence.

Others in the Methodist tradition also set an example for Smith. E. Stanley Jones, a sometime co-worker with Gandhi, wrote the classic *With Christ on the Indian Road*. This book, which outlined his work in discipling people into the Christian faith through establishing a Christian ashram of sorts, was also an influence on Smith. This was particularly so when, through contact with the 1970s counter-culture, Smith had to relate and respond to Eastern-influenced 'hippies' (Smith, interview, 1998a). At a time when many evangelical leaders were fearful of Eastern influence Smith was freed by Jones' example to dialogue with and recruit followers from counter-cultural ranks.

Francis Schaeffer

Francis Schaeffer had a crucial influence on John Smith's intellectual development and practical ministry. It is ironic that this conservative Presbyterian fundamentalist made such an impact on the radical Jesus Movement both in Australia and around the world. Born in Pennsylvania, Schaeffer was converted to evangelical Christianity as a teenager. A gifted polymath, he rose quickly through the Presbyterian ranks, siding with the more conservative Bible-oriented elements. In 1948 he went as a missionary to Europe, where modern liberal theology was viewed as a threat to reformed faith. In 1955 he established independently 'L'Abri' -- 'The Shelter', which initially was simply the opening of his Swiss Chalet as a refuge for confused American students

and servicemen. By the late 1960s, L'Abri had expanded to become a popular haven for disaffected youth from around the world. Schaeffer and his wife, Edith, opened their establishment to all seekers, provided they were willing to debate their philosophy of life (Schaeffer, 1969). They also pioneered the medium of sound cassettes as a means of study both at L'Abri and in extension studies. Schaeffer encouraged conservative evangelicals to take seriously secular philosophy and the arts, which he believed were expressions of the distress people felt in trying to live without God. He also took ecology seriously, which was something of a first for fundamentalism (Schaeffer, 1973), and helped open the way for ecological thought and action to become one of the hallmarks of the Jesus Movement.

John Smith was so impressed by Schaeffer that he ordered every cassette tape produced by L'Abri in the early 70s and went to visit in 1974.

What Schaeffer did for us was say to a lot of us who had come out of the fundamentalist roost 'It's alright to use your mind'. That was the great liberating thing he did [for us]. (Smith, interview, 1998a).

Schaeffer was in fact a populariser of conservative Dutch Reformed theologians who developed his own quasi-philosophical terminology (Brown, 1968: 260-7). He was a modernist and rationalist who treated the Bible in a dogmatic way as his scientific and historical textbook. For Smith, who had no affinity with European Calvinism anyway, Schaeffer's influence was powerful but shortlived. Schaeffer's approach allowed no scope for anything non-cognitive, and the more the Jesus Movement sought to preach the gospel to Hindu and Buddhist-influenced adherents of the burgeoning counter-culture, the more limiting Schaeffer seemed (Smith, interview, 1998a).

Apart from giving a generation of fundamentalists permission to use their minds and to take the arts seriously, Schaeffer's most important influence on John Smith as a movement leader was practical. Smith admits that the example of Schaeffer in opening his home to wandering seekers to come and stay, often for weeks or months at a time, was a "wonderful example" and a powerful model for the development of the Jesus Movement's ministry. In addition, some of Schaeffer's less extreme L'Abri colleagues, most notably Os Guinness and Hans Rookmaaker, had a more lasting influence on Smith's thought. "Some of those guys opened up the arts to us, and we came to see that the arts were not the enemy, they were simply the nerve ends of the soul of the culture," and therefore needed to be taken seriously (Smith, interview, 2000a). In the 1980s Schaeffer reverted to a more traditional fundamentalist moral

agenda, but by this time Smith and other Jesus Movement leaders had moved on. Other influences with a more lasting impact on Smith came from his own country.

Henry Lawson

Most Australian school children have read Henry Lawson's work at some stage of their education. John Smith was no exception, and Lawson made a profound impact on him. It seems to have been something in Lawson's sympathy and compassion for people battling to scrape together a living on the edges of a frontier society or in the dingier quarters of industrial urban society. Here was a republican socialist alcoholic with an almost obsessive interest in Christ, not as a divine saviour but as an ethical figurehead and advocate for the poor and the marginalised. Like Smith after him, Lawson was reacting against Calvinistic theology (in Lawson's case that of his mother, who mixed it with her own Nordic brand of gnosticism), and against the historic use of Christianity as a moral correction rather than a message of grace. Poems such as the *Prodigal Son*, *One Hundred and Three*, *The Christ of the Never*, and stories such as *Shall We Gather at the River* express Lawson's spirituality of the battler, and his equating of mateship with true Christian fellowship. "Henry had enormous influence on me for the feel of Australian culture and particularly the marginalised: the lost" (Smith, interview, 1998a). For someone growing up within the somewhat sheltered confines of a country manse, reading Lawson helped Smith to identify with the feel of the pub, the campfire, and the city streets. At the same time, Smith recognised in Lawson's work some of those who came regularly knocking of the door of the manse: swagmen, the homeless, and those 'down on their luck'.

Manning Clark

In one sense it was Henry Lawson who led John Smith into reading Manning Clark. The latter's 1978 book *In Search of Henry Lawson* was criticised widely as containing small factual errors, but Smith appreciated that it was a book in search of the heart of Henry Lawson, an aspect which fascinated Smith as it did Clark. Smith then read Clark's multi-volumed *A History of Australia*. As in the Lawson book, Clark was not attempting to chronicle facts and figures. Rather, he sought to dig beneath the surface of Australian history to search for a reason and a meaning for Australia being as it was. Why was the spirit of Australia so sardonic, so sceptical and so sad? Why were white and black Australians so desperately unable to hear each other (Clark, 1990:162-3, 220-1)? Clark set out to discover the answers to these questions. He couched his inquiry frequently in terms of biblical and (Anglican) Book of Common Prayer references. He viewed Australia's development as a struggle between Protestant, Enlightenment and Catholic belief systems. From

Smith's perspective this approach was similar to the Bible's method of recording the history of Israel (interview, 1998a). It was an entering into the soul of the nation rather than an attempt at always-objective chronicling.

[Clark] lamented the failure of Jesus' followers to provide an alternative to the soulless hedonism in which had drowned the idealism of the Enlightenment experiment. He asked the question as to what Australians were going to put in the place of God. Would we become citizens of a 'kingdom of nothingness', as he put it (Smith, interview, 2000b)?

In addition Smith felt empathy and affinity for Clark at a personal level, which is not surprising when one considers the similarities in their backgrounds and temperaments. Both were products of the 'genteel poverty' of a clergy parentage and were loners and "thoughtful customers", to use a phrase of Clark's father (Clark, 1989: 87). Towards the end of Clark's life the two became friends, with the Smiths joining Manning and Dymphna Clark for a holiday on the south coast of NSW. It is an interesting question as to why Smith did not, like Clark, ever make a clear break with the Christian church of his father. Manning Clark gives as one of the reasons for his agnosticism the fact that as a boy he saw too many people in his father's church failing to live out the teaching of Jesus (Clark, 1989: 122-147). Smith had the same experiences of hard-hearted parishioners, as seen in Chapter 2. However he sees a combination of temperamental, theological and historical factors as the reason for his response being different from Clark's.

Manning's temperament was more pessimistic and melancholic than mine. I always live in hope that tomorrow things might change. Theologically, I'm an evangelical, so for me the fatal flaw in human nature opens the door to redemption rather than to despair. But he reacted so much against [the concept of] original sin. I never really expected much better of people anyway. Wherever you get an institution, and the church is an institution, you expect that kind of shit from people. My Father was a big influence on me. He's a sparky little guy, and he never poured acid on another human being. He taught me to be cynical about institutions, but positive about the redemptive possibilities for human beings. And then, in terms of timing of the soul, Manning had lived through the first and second world wars, and experienced more of the horror of human behaviour. Maybe he had more of the Fabian, Socialist, European spirit of disillusionment than I did. I discovered life while surfing the wave of new hope which was the 1960s revolution, with the Jesus Movement as a kind of lifeboat (Smith, interview, 2000b).

It was Clark whose work first asked questions publicly about the spirit and soul of Australia and who bore ridicule for doing so. For this he remains a hero for Smith and his *A History of Australia*, though already dated in its historiographical approach, will always be relevant for Smith because it "traces so sensitively the source of a fast-

growing stream" (interview, 1998a). For Smith, Clark is an anti-fundamentalist role model who asserts that the truth of the story is more important than a literal reading of the facts. "I think Manning Clark, along with John Pilger, has received an awful lot of hatred and vilification because they cut so close to the bone in terms of what is true about us," Smith believes (interview 1998a). He claims to have been one of the first in the Australian church to adopt Clark's work as a weapon in the fight against secularism.

Gumleaf Theology

In the 1970s, partly in response to the publication of Clark's history with its interest in Australian spirituality, there developed in Australia a phenomenon which came to be popularly known as 'gumleaf theology'. This was an attempt to contextualise Christianity in the Australia reflected by writers such as Lawson, Clark, Geoffrey Blainey and others: a nation newly self-conscious of its independence from Britain, its geographical placement far from European roots, and its identity separate from that of the U.S.A. with its expanding cultural hegemony through television and films.

This theology was not a product of the Jesus Movement, but John Smith was an early proponent and populariser of it, and was in turn influenced by it. In addition, for a time the Melbourne section of the Jesus Movement came to be identified with it (Millikan 1981: 95-9). There had been much debate in the movement as to whether Australia was a Christian country, a post-Christian country, or whether it had never been a Christian country at all, due to its roots in aboriginal culture and the predominantly deist mainstream of 18th century England. Smith and a minority of the movement's activists decided Australia was "pre-Christian", awaiting the "liberating message of an indigenised form of the gospel."

We concluded that a nation in search of a soul might easily be convinced it is in search of Jesus...(and) that having a painful national childhood was no reason to spend our lives fighting the ghost of a misrepresented divine parent (Smith, email communication, 2000).

For a time the Jesus Movement and 'gumleaf theology' were in partnership, though Smith was just as quick to abandon the latter when he sensed it was running out of energy and direction in the early 1980s.

Despite its facetious name gumleaf theology was a sustained and serious attempt to indigenise the gospel in the Australian cultural setting of the 'ocker' 1970s; to relocate the church in terms of the expression of its message and the audience to which it spoke; to bring the church into settings more natural to Australians than derivative

church buildings, using forms of worship less alienating than the predominantly European and American forms employed at the time. Versions of the Jesus story set in Australian surroundings became popular. In various publications Jesus was portrayed as born in a shed, surrounded by kangaroos and bandicoots, because there was no room in the pub. He was worshipped by drovers rather than shepherds, and so on. Artists such as Pro Hart and writer Norman Habel lent their talents to this cause (Habel and Hart, 1983). Musicians produced recordings of songs along similar lines. Perhaps the high point of gumleaf theology's influence came with David Millikan's nationally broadcast ABC television series and book *The Sunburnt Soul* (1981), subtitled *Christianity in Search of an Australian Identity*. Millikan, who thought the churches had made belief difficult for Australians by maintaining foreign expressions of Christianity that did not resonate with life in this country, presented his ideas in terms of a personal search for the relevance of Christianity in Australia. He saw Christ "in the pubs, on the beaches, and in the outback of Australia, drawing from it the same richness he found in Palestine...Christ began to look like an Australian" (1981:111). He acknowledged that this was dangerous, and that it was "easy to impose on the image we are looking for the thing we want to see" (1981:111). Yet he feared that if Australians did not find their own vision of Christ "we might find he has moved beyond our reach" (Millikan, 1981: 111). It was an important point but one which could only be taken so far, and inevitably gumleaf theology began to seem trivialised.

By the early 1980s John Smith concluded intuitively that gumleaf theology had gone far enough, and he abandoned it. "If you totally contextualise, it becomes parochial and you start to lose the catholicity and universality of the doctrine, and it simply becomes captive to the thought forms of a small...culture," he reflected nearly twenty years later (interview, 1998a). At the time he was criticised for deserting the cause. In fact, he was more likely demonstrating the charismatic leader's instinctive feeling for timing, and for how to ride a popular trend until it starts to become codified and stale, then leave it quickly. Using surfing imagery, he explains:

You get in with that early flow. You may not be the starter of it but you get in on the best waves when they're on a roll. Then it sort of takes off and becomes flavour of the month and it pushes the thing to an ideological conclusion and you find yourself having to back out. Now when gumleaf theology became a popular term is about when I started to back off because I felt it had become a trivialised thing and that it was no longer theological but sociological (Smith, interview, 1998a).

Liberation Theology

In a sense John Smith's interest in Liberation Theology can be linked with his interest in John Wesley, who insisted that his itinerant preachers carry his *Journal of Medicine* with them on their travels, along with medical kits to treat the sick. In addition, the beginnings of the trade union movement can be traced to early Methodism. Smith believes Wesley was a liberation theologian in the 1700s:

Wesley said the medical profession had already become an elitist profession wherein their vocabulary was inaccessible to ordinary people and therefore they had lost the sovereign right to make decisions about their own bodies and he wished to restore to them the power over their own decision making and their own health. The same with children: Wesley instructed his preachers to sit at the feet of children weekly and listen to them because he said the offices and the rituals of the church were inaccessible to children and that one ought to develop rituals and catechisms that came out of an understanding of the way children see the world. That was extremely radical, and very close to the action/reflection model of Latin [American] liberation theology (Smith, interview, 1998a).

In fact, Smith claims the action/reflection hermeneutic of Latin American liberation theology was one of the directions the Jesus Movement took once it moved away from Schaeffer's influence. "We didn't buy the whole Marxist package but we did buy something of Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970)" (Smith, interview, 2000b) By the mid 1970s Smith had read this and other classic Liberation Theology texts, such as Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation* (1973).

The moment I got wind of this stuff I just went out and bought myself about forty books from Latin America and Asia that were radical views of the gospel and I just read them. I couldn't see any problem if I had the bible in one hand and kept close to the real world. I couldn't see that it was dangerous to read what the radicals were saying (Smith, interview, 2000b).

In a sense Liberation Theology was part of the Jesus Movement in Australia from its beginnings: "When we did our ministry we were mixing with so many different cultural fragments, so many strands of the seamless garment of Western culture that was unravelling before our eyes. You simply couldn't make sense of it in traditional ways" (Smith, interview, 2000b). The Jesus Movement had to find its own way forward, acting intuitively where need was uncovered, and then reflecting on the action. Without knowing intellectually what they were doing, it was in fact something similar to what the liberation theologians were doing, with their interest in a theology which arises from the people and reflects their desperate needs. Like the liberationists, the Jesus Movement was stressing the relationship between God and the poor, and preaching a Kingdom of God primarily for the ordinary and relatively

powerless people. Thus when the Latin and Asian texts appeared, Smith and others recognised the subject matter as familiar.

By the early 1980s the protest movement against U.S. interference in Central America was at its height, and the Jesus Movement in Australia, which by then had begun to refer to itself as the radical discipleship movement, was involved. Dr Athol Gill and his community the House of the Gentle Bunyip in Melbourne (where he had moved from Brisbane) were supporting and regularly visiting local Latin American communities who were pro-Sandinistas; Sydney's John Hirt was heavily involved from his temporary base at Berkeley. John Smith likewise visited Central America in 1988, taking aid to refugees in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Costa Rica. With Athol Gill he visited Mexico several times in an effort to take aid (including \$17,000 raised by Smith's small Melbourne church) to groups of indigenous people who had lost their land in a conflict with the Government.

In 1989 Smith visited the Philippines for an international evangelical conference in Manila, the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation. With him were Glenna Smith and Martyn Newman, a God's Squad biker who with John's encouragement had recently earned a Master's degree with a thesis on Liberation Theology. Arriving days early in Manila they made contact with human rights workers to offer their services. Glenna was asked to go to the island of Negros as one of three foreign observers to help discourage vigilante atrocities on a group of 700 internal refugees being protected by a Roman Catholic bishop in a seminary. Smith and Newman went to the island of Mindanao with a Filipina lawyer to act as observers and to photograph the bulldozing of houses of the poor by a local mayor who was looking for buried gold. These were squatters' homes on government land, but hundreds were being left homeless. Smith and Newman, led by the lawyer (whose brother had been killed the previous week) stood in the path of Government bulldozers and came close to being summarily executed. Smith, noticing a 'Jesus' logo on the T-shirt of the man pointing an M16 assault rifle at him, snapped and poked his finger at the man's chest, chastising him severely (Smith, magazine, 1989c: 20-24). They were arrested, interrogated and imprisoned. The mayor declared his intention to kill not only Smith and Newman, but the officers who failed to shoot them on the spot, and it was only the international attention drawn to their plight through the newsagency Reuters by visiting human rights journalists that eventually resulted in their release. When they reached the congress in Manila for which they had originally come to the Philippines, they were castigated by the organisers for their alleged foolishness and for embarrassing the evangelical cause (Smith, interview, 2000b). Smith still feels the sting of the rebuke, but is encouraged by the belief that their stand helped to start a

process by which land was granted to the poor of Mindanao (Smith, interview, 2000b). Some with a deeper knowledge of the situation in Mindanao might say this is a fond dream. It is however characteristic of the charismatic leader's supreme confidence in his own ability to set in motion a transformational process.

Anthropology and Missiology

With the arrival of the 1990s there begins to be apparent in Smith's public speaking an increasing critique of sociology, and a growing interest in anthropology. In part this reflects his experience with indigenous people and other marginalised groups, but also with young people in the multicultural Australia which was fast replacing the old 'ocker' scene of the 1970s. He is critical of some of the current wisdom of sociological orthodoxy, with its love of generalising about generations ('boomers' and 'Gen X') on the basis of superficial evidence. For example he told thousands of students to ignore the advice of their teachers and counsellors that they had to break with the values of their parents in order to grow up. Anthropology led him to believe such theory was inadequate, and he claimed this was confirmed by his observation of young people in both mainstream and ethnic cultural groups, through his work in schools and involvement in projects with unemployed and troubled young people (Smith, address, 1997). While other para-church groups gained media exposure through dressing pop-psychology and pop-sociology in religious clothes, Smith increasingly focused his interest on cultural studies to help him in his mission. Eventually, with the help of scholarships, he began doctoral study in urban anthropology at Asbury Seminary in Kentucky, a leading Methodist institution. For Smith such studies have been an opportunity to reflect on the theory which helps to explain his various intuitively inspired successes and failures as a charismatic and transformational leader in working with different subcultures during the last thirty years. Smith found studies of the original first century Jesus Movement enlightening in his reflection on the 20th century movement. As a result of the study Smith believes he has a better understanding of the movement in which he was an Australian leader, and on the reasons for his various successes and failures both in mission and leadership.

Overview

Though Smith was naturally gifted in various ways, there were cultural, social and theological factors at work in his development as a charismatic and transformational leader and communicator. The evolution of Australian society and culture, and the character of Australian spirituality by the 1970s, were such that Smith was in a good position to understand and communicate with his generation about matters of life and faith. In addition his background in Methodism gave him a framework for taking the Christian gospel outside church walls and into the places where secular Australia

gathered. His effectiveness in this gave him much to offer the Jesus Movement and the unchurched people of Australia, and was in part attributed to him in charismatic terms. Other intellectual and practical influences helped enable Smith to connect further with the hearts, minds and spirits of his fellow Australians, and in particular with marginalised groups such as the poor and oppressed. In addition he was well-placed to begin his mission to one of the most perplexing and intimidating subcultures in Australian society, that of the 'outlaw' motorcycle clubs.

CHAPTER 6

God's Biker: Smith becomes a public figure

In one sense John Smith's 29-year presidency of the God's Squad Christian Motorcycle Club has been a relatively minor part of his ministry and life, and one which has influenced his personal development less than people might think. It has been one of the most difficult and least fruitful aspects of his work in terms of numbers of people influenced. Yet, given the media's response to it, God's Squad is the work for which Smith is best known publicly. It is also a part of his work with the Jesus Movement which he counts as very significant, and of which he is proud.

God's Squad is the flagship of our movement, in the sense that it gives a certain ... impact. I mean if all the Squad turn up at church, you know you have a church for the marginalised and a church without walls. You don't have to say a word (Smith, interview, 1998a).

The 'outlaw' biker scene afforded Smith a context in which to exercise many aspects of his charismatic and transformational leadership gifts. Its heavily ritualised, tribally functioning, deeply conservative, strictly disciplined nature, with strong sense of mythology and pageantry, offer a club president opportunity almost unparalleled in modern times to play the role of an old-fashioned charismatic warlord. At the same time, the communitarian nature of the biker club, with its strict processes of formation for members, allows for a transforming process to take place in the lives of individuals who submit to the leadership structure. In this chapter I examine these matters in some detail, after first going back (for the sake of clarity) to 1970 and tracing the history of John Smith's involvement as a biker, and the growth to credibility and prominence of God's Squad within the subculture. I then examine the media career which opened up for Smith directly as a result of his identification with 'outlaw' bikers.

Initial contact with outlaw bikers

Smith stresses that he never had any secret desire to ride a motor-cycle, let alone fraternise with bikers. Early association with outlaw motorcycle club culture, coincided with his new identification with the counter-culture. He was fascinated to be learning about ecology, eastern religion, secular philosophy, rock-music culture, left-wing politics, modern literature, and other influences from which he had been sheltered since the earliest days of his conservative evangelical upbringing. He felt a great temperamental affinity with the 'hippies', and was wearing the colourful and

demonstrative clothing which reflected their individualistic demeanour (Smith, interview, 1998a).

Smith's initial spark of interest in bikers took place in early 1971 while he was still with Campaigners for Christ. Driving out the Calder Highway one day, he saw a group of bikers in club 'colours' by the roadside. He felt a surge of compassion for them, thinking these were people no-one in society, let alone the church, wanted to know. He had an immediate and powerful impression that if he was serious about following Jesus Christ into serving despised people, this was one such group that could not be ignored. Smith remembers: "I just wept and felt the Spirit of God come upon me for these guys. I never dreamt that I could do anything for them, but I just knew someone had to reach them" (interview, 2000a). He began to pray that God would raise up someone who could bring the gospel to outlaw bikers, but says he considered himself "far too straight altogether" for the job (1987: 152).

At the time 'outlaw' bikers (or 'bikies' as the media dubbed them) were as despised in Australia as they are today, but less glamorous. Outlaw bikers then literally did not - on principle - wash either themselves or their jeans⁹ and certainly never engaged in such philanthropic activities as collecting toys for orphans at Christmas as they do today. In the 1970s they were commonly described as hardened and filthy undesirables. Though Smith had no desire to join them, he believed the bikers were like the lepers of Jesus' time (1987: 151-2), and like St Francis with the lepers outside Assisi, Smith could not remove the image of these bikers from his mind.

As time went by and he met both Christian motorcyclists and bikers at coffee shops or drop-in centres, Smith began to feel more at ease with people from the motorcycle subculture. He teamed up with a Baptist youth worker and former stunt rider, Eddie Pye, to try and make inroads into the motorcycle subculture.

In August 1971 Eddie grabbed me after a Baptist youth camp at Healesville and said "Man, you've got it with young people. You ought to get on a motor cycle." I said "If you knew my history of accidents you wouldn't say that" (Smith, interview, 2000b).

Pye, who from 1952 to 1966 was one of Australia's foremost motorcycle stunt riders and a veteran of the showground circuit, gave up stunt riding after being converted to Christianity. He sold motorcycles for a living, however, and in the late 1960s felt a vocation to use his knowledge of motor-cycles as a means of communicating the

⁹ Levi 'originals' were worn unwashed from the day they were bought, and were often communally urinated on to break them in.

Christian gospel to outlaw motorcycle groups. He knew that he was not suitable to be leader of such a venture however, and was on the lookout for the right person. Upon first meeting, Smith did not seem an obvious candidate for the job either.

John was very shy and reserved at this stage, mainly sticking to primary schools in his evangelism work. He was a teacher/preacher type, wearing a pinstripe suit and literally carrying a broom. But he was very unhappy and unsettled in the church, with its structures, and in Campaigners for Christ. He was looking for that freedom that Christ promises us when we know the truth. I was drawn to him, and felt an immediate trust in him (Pye, interview, 2001).

Pye invited John and Glenna to the Healesville youth camp in the winter of 1971, by which time he had gained an irrational but unshakeable conviction "through prayer and the Lord's direction" (Pye, interview, 2001) that Smith was the leader he was looking for.

God points someone out to you. It was a unique experience for me. Not an audible voice, but a very deep conviction. I put it to John on this weekend. "What?", said Glenna, "Ride a motorbike? He crashes his car every three weeks." But there was no doubt in my mind he was to be our leader (Pye, interview, 2000).

They launched a Christian Motor Cycle Association in late 1971, which ran bush riding activities on a friend's block at Sylvan. This association was not for outlaw bikers but simply for teenagers who were interested in recreational riding. Later in 1971 Smith was invited to speak at a large annual Christian youth event on Queensland's Gold Coast. There he made contact with a group of motorcyclists called God's Squad, named as a play on words from the popular TV show of the time, the Mod Squad. They had American Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and rode them well, giving them credibility in terms of the trappings and skills of 'outlaw' motorcycle gangs. Smith enjoyed being pillion-ridden around on their bikes, gaining "a taste for the joys of motorcycle riding" (1987: 154). As he reflected on the best way to penetrate the biker subculture, the conviction grew that God was calling him to be personally involved, in particular through the formation of a Melbourne chapter for God's Squad. Smith recruited seven original members for the chapter, including Pye, and they rode to Sydney to receive their club 'colours' on May 13, 1972. No-one disputed that Smith should be president of the chapter, despite the fact that he had only recently learned to ride.

Months earlier, with Pye's help, Smith had bought a new Honda 500cc, a large bike for those days. In 1972 a novice could ride such a motorcycle immediately, as long as he/she had a learner's permit. As Smith climbed astride it for the first time, creaking

in his new leather jacket and boots, he had to ask one of his recruits how the gear-change worked. "It was a docile, quiet bike to learn on," claims Pye, "and he adapted to it quickly. He was safer on a bike than in a car. As far as I know, he didn't fall off it in that first year" (Pye, interview, 2001). Smith's memories of the Honda 500 are different: it was a "real mongrel of a bike", with a fault that leaked fuel on to the back wheel making the tyre dangerously slippery (Smith: 1987: 159). He admits to having been "rigid with fear", his stomach churning with heartburn through "sheer anxiety", as he leaned into the curves on his early rides (1987: 159).

Smith may have been a vastly inferior rider to the members of the Sydney chapter, but he had a much stronger vision and drive for the club's mission. With time the Sydney group disintegrated while the Melbourne group established itself and is widely accepted in the subculture nearly thirty years later as a bona fide motor cycle club, welcome at various outlaw club gatherings in the eastern states of Australia. John expresses his aim from the beginning of this involvement in St Paul's words as "By whatever means to save some": in other words as evangelical. He wanted to be available and visible to bikers not for the sake of being authentic as a biker himself -- something about which he has always felt ambivalent -- but in order to offer the Christian faith to them if they were interested. The transformational leader wanted biker followers not for their own sake, for he already had a growing number of followers, but in order to lead them to the higher order values of the Christian faith. He had by now sensed some of the public relations advantages of being a Christian biker but it is unlikely that these alone would have motivated him to make the effort to infiltrate this potentially dangerous subculture.

Initially God's Squad was treated with contempt at informal biker gatherings. "John was very confident, but very patient," says Pye. "He would stand back, listen and look, not speaking until he was spoken to, and eventually this paid off" (Pye, interview, 2001). It was not until they made converts from high-status outlaw biker ranks that they began to command more respect. The Huns, who ranked second only to the Hell's Angels as 'tough guys' in the bike scene, had their origins in a Melbourne University motorcycle club. Their leaders were intelligent and educated, if cynical, personalities who were willing to discuss philosophy with Squad members and found in Smith someone who could address their scepticism and bitterness. Peter 'Quince' O'Neill and Howard 'Spiv' Ham were considered high profile outlaw 'hot-heads', whose defection to God's Squad from the Huns staggered the bike scene and boosted the Christian club's reputation. Gradually other converts followed. Through these associations Smith learned and understood more about the outlaw bikers and how they functioned. From the converts he

learned the subcultural proprieties and more about how to behave from a biker point of view. Although his riding skills were still well below those of his new companions, he was prepared to risk his life to ride at the front of the pack as a club president should do, and at a speed that would not embarrass his followers. As his heavy black beard grew down over his chest and his leathers grew scuffed he looked the part, and the Squad with their black and red heraldic 'patches' began to appear as a legitimate 'outlaw' gang. The difference, according to one young woman whom Smith claims wrote to him after being introduced to Squad members by a friend at a cafe in Melbourne, was in their eyes, which were soft rather than hard and compassionate rather than dismissive (Smith, recorded address, 1987). Smith found some of the rituals which he had to perform as club president in making contact with outlaw groups quite repulsive -- the tongue-kissing of another (male) club leader mentioned in his autobiography is an example (1987: 5-6) -- but he would brace himself determinedly to do what he considered had to be done. There was a price to pay for charismatic leadership, and Smith was prepared to pay it where he judged it did not seriously compromise his transformational ends.

Establishing credibility

Smith verged at times on foolhardiness in his eagerness to prove himself as a fitting president of a bike club. In retrospect this behaviour is not surprising given that he was a charismatic leader in the process of establishing the requisite heroic authority. Biker presidents win respect and establish themselves not just through personal charisma but through acts of daring courage. An example was Smith's decision to take a group of God's Squad members across the Nullarbor Plain in the middle of the summer of 1972-3. He wanted to meet members of the Jesus Movement in Perth and at the same time show that he could lead his club members over the most notorious stretch of unsealed and pot-holed road in Australia. Typically, he stayed up most of the night talking as they camped on a beach at Ceduna before tackling the 3000 kilometre journey across semi-desert to Perth. He set off exhausted and soon dropped behind the others as he struggled with dehydration and eventually hallucinations. Helped by 'Spiv' he made it to Perth, despite being semi-conscious and delirious for much of the journey.

The Perth sojourn was a disaster. Their list of contacts had been lost and the Christian establishment where they were to stay took one look at them and told them to leave. They slept by the Swan River under the Narrows Bridge, where they were disturbed by rats, instead. Smith received a black eye when he stepped in to defend the victim of what he perceived as a cruel buck's party stunt in the city. Finally, in his exhausted state he made what he thought was an off-the-record comment to a

journalist about how rejected his party felt by local Christians. It resulted in a front-page *West Australian* report which portrayed him as attacking the Western Australian churches. By now *persona non grata* in Perth, Smith set off with the group to return home via Albany and Esperance. Along the way he injured his remaining good eye with an octopus strap hook. He then crashed his bike outside Esperance, breaking his collar-bone, and was kept in hospital for a week while his damaged bike was trucked back to Melbourne. When he eventually arrived home by air, it was not a triumphant homecoming. It was with his arm in a sling that he attended Sunbury '73, revisiting the scene of his initiation into pop culture one long year before. He must have presented a considerably different persona than at Sunbury '72! Smith considers the Perth trip to be highly significant as a rite of passage, an educative experience, a step to proving himself worthy of being God's Squad's president, and above all an introduction to how it really felt to be marginalised as he and his group experienced rejection and public contempt in Perth. For a transformational leader the journey was an exercise in identifying with first hand the marginalised people he would be ministering to for most of his life.

It was at the third and final Sunbury festival in January 1974 that God's Squad established major credibility with the top ranking outlaw biker club, the Hell's Angels. By that time optimism had left the youth movement and Sunbury was less of a counter-culture festival and more of a giant rock concert and alcoholic binge. Several biker clubs were present, but the Hell's Angels had established a camp in a prime creek-side position, complete with generator, refrigeration, armchairs and shade. The police panicked when they heard rumours of a massive skirmish to take place between the bikers and the other major subcultural group at Sunbury, the skinheads, then at the height of fashion and their powers as street bullies in Melbourne. Smith believes the police were hesitant to tackle the skinheads because they were harder to differentiate from the rest of the crowd, their uniform being baggy jeans ('flags') and crew cuts, which were widely in fashion that year anyway. He believes they therefore focused on the bikers whose long hair, black leathers and club 'patches' made them obvious (1987: 199-200). The police expelled the bikers, with the exception of God's Squad, whom they allowed to stay as a wholesome influence, and the Hell's Angels, whom they were reticent to disturb. The skinheads saw their opportunity to attack a reduced number of their sworn enemies, the bikers, and a confrontation was planned. The Hell's Angels, with whom Smith and the God's Squad had made some friendly contacts, asked whether God's Squad would stand with them to fight when the skinheads came over the hill. God's Squad indicated that they would stand with the Angels, but that instead of fighting they would march up to the advancing skinheads, Gandhi-style, and ask them to lay

down their arms, which would have consisted of chains, batons, and possibly knives. In typical transformational style, Smith explained to the Hell's Angels: "Our egos are not in this world. They rest in the fact that we believe the God of the Universe loves us and therefore we don't have anything to prove by winning a fight" (1987: 199-203). With that they devoted themselves to prayer, and when the appointed time came, the skinheads did not appear. An anti-climax, perhaps, but the Hell's Angels had been sure the fight would take place and were most impressed with the courage of the Christians, believing they would have been beaten to a pulp (Smith, interview, 1998b).

Smith used one of his favourite arguments on that day: that people prove nothing by fighting, least of all manhood or intelligence, because even dumb animals will readily fight over territory or status. Again, it was the transformational appeal to higher values and consciousness, made in a situation that was very tribal and primitive in its mentality. The increased credibility earned on this occasion soon became known among other biker clubs, and played a part in the conversion of two new God's Squad members: Mongrel, who had been vice president of the notorious Coffin Cheaters, and Ferret, who was a founding member of the Melbourne chapter of Hell's Angels. Smith's idealistic and spiritual stance appealed to individuals within even the most hardened of social groups.

Outlaw Motorcycle Culture: an opportunity for transformational leadership

In the nearly thirty years of his God's Squad presidency the biker subculture had little real influence on Smith's personal or intellectual development. He admits that he finds it too closed a subculture, too para-military in its ideology and practice, too stiflingly narrow and conservative in its social structure and behaviour, and too generally anti-intellectual to suit him personally (Smith, interview, 2000b). Though he eventually grew to love the experience of riding a Harley-Davidson, his day to day preference for transport was a battered Toyota four-wheel drive vehicle, bought with help from Glenna's mother, which could carry passengers and get him out among the flora and fauna. He admits to feeling, for much of his career, like a hippy disguised in tough leather gear and biker colours. "I really prefer fine things, soft fabrics, colourful and delicate things like flowers" he told me once as we watched a version of the Scarlet Pimpernel on television (1990).

However Smith was influenced by the bike scene in other less intellectual ways. Since the early 1970s he looked like a biker, and not just in public. To observers he rarely appears at ease when dressed in clothing other than what a respectable biker

would be seen wearing: top boots, dark jeans, black T-shirt or heavy duty denim shirt under his leather jacket and club 'colours'. His voice and vocal delivery can be loud and intimidating; his personal appearance and direct manner are such that I once heard a cynical media executive remark in surprise that he's the 'real thing', not just an ordinary minister in fancy dress. To Eddie Pye the transformation in a short time from reserved "teacher/preacher type" to genuine biker was verging on the miraculous. "The Lord changed him so that you would never have known. The Lord gave him the spirit to be a true radical. He didn't learn off[sic] anyone" (Pye, interview, 2001). Smith became, and remains, sympathetic to bikers as people, genuine in his relationships with outlaw biker leaders, fascinated by biker culture as a phenomenon, and very knowledgeable about it.

The motorcycle subculture has been good to John Smith, as he in turn has been good for it. Importantly, it gave him an easily recognisable public profile, and a colourful mission field. It offered him a means of being clearly identified with 'publicans and sinners' as Jesus was in the four gospels, thus increasing his credibility as someone effectively reviving the original first century Jesus Movement. It enabled him to dramatically gain the attention of difficult young audiences. On occasions he was known to ride his motorcycle into halls for effect before public speeches. Early on Smith discovered that identifying with bikers meant that he would both benefit from and suffer through the public perception of bikers. When he had an accident on his first bike and went to a hospital casualty ward with a badly injured hand, he found that he had to sit and wait all day in great pain while more respectably presented people with lesser injuries were treated. Once, in Elizabeth, South Australia, he went with God's Squad members to the police station to protest about vicious police brutality to an aboriginal youth they had helped. The sergeant and his assistants laughed contemptuously at them for daring, as bikers, to involve themselves. Smith went to the newspapers and within twenty-four hours had the police hierarchy politely requesting "Rev. Smith" to appear in face-saving radio and television broadcasts with a police spokesman (Smith, interview, 2000b). To the transformational leader this kind of situation was deeply rewarding: standing in solidarity with the poor, being recognised for it, and eventually being able to broadcast a moral and idealistic message to the public, accompanied by an apology from the 'oppressive' power.

Involvement in the biker subculture offered Smith opportunities to use his charismatic and transformational gifts in unusual ways. In an earlier chapter I noted Bryan Wilson's connecting the appeal of the charismatic leader with the appeal to primitive needs in people for a strong paternal or leading warrior figure to come to their aid (Wilson, 1975: 118-9). Wilson notes the transformative nature of such leadership

when he says that such a leader is referred to for a sense of right and wrong, love, loyalty and ethical concern. Wilson's point is that such truly charismatic leadership is less and less likely to emerge in western societies where technique and sophistication are increasingly valued above warrior virtues. Yet the outlaw biker culture offers a quite unique opportunity today for a medieval-style warlord figure to emerge as a leader. The requisite technology is minimal: one Harley Davidson motorcycle (Smith rode Japanese bikes in the 1970s but by 1980 had graduated to a 'Harley', by then the only motorcycle considered capable of demonstrating the necessary 'machismo' for an outlaw-style club president). What is far more important is the powerful presence of command, the air of authority, the 'walk and the talk' of a 'leader of men', and the record of heroic deeds and feats achieved to earn or justify leadership.

Outlaw clubs are both tribal and military in their regime. The hierarchy is rigid and authoritarian ... Officers may occasionally be challenged, but their power within the club is not the least nominal. [The biker style is] a mixture of wild west gunslinging bravado and the heraldic tradition of the Middle Ages. [Groups such as the Hells Angels] look for a particular carriage, a massive self-assurance which commands respect (Smith, 1987: 168-9, 170).

Once established in a position of power in his club, Smith had, as other biker club presidents have, unusual ability to command and influence the members of his club. The club leader has enormous transformational opportunities throughout the process of formation of members. A recruit enters the club by becoming a 'nominee' and serves liminal time as a low status non-member, absorbing the rules and mores of the club as enforced by the president and his 'sergeant-at-arms'. When the nominee is initiated into membership he (the club is a male-only preserve) must submit to strict rules of loyalty and confidentiality before being presented with a 'patch' in the club colours and being formally accepted into the brotherhood. Smith likens it to the kind of influence E. Stanley Jones had in establishing an ashram in India for the purpose of forming Christian disciples: disciplinary and formational powers not normally available to Christian leaders were at his disposal. "(The outlaw club) is paramilitary stuff: the inside stuff is totally inside; to commit treason (to the group) is worse than any other sin" (Smith, interview, 1998a). God's Squad became in some ways like an alternative religious order, functioning as an excellent vehicle for mentoring Christians who did not fit into regular church life. It was not just a gimmick for evangelisation, but a vehicle for formation and, in Turner's terms, reaggregation (Turner, 1969). With its tight discipline and strong group sanctions, such a subcultural group commands a commitment from individuals that no church could reasonably or successfully demand.

None of this success came easily, and nor have spectacular numbers of people been transformed. Smith calls it a tough, dry field of ministry, with only 70-80 having passed through the process of mentoring and discipleship in nearly 30 years. He found it much easier to draw a response from the optimistic and open-minded 'hippies' than he ever did from the smaller group of people who were amenable to the closed, cynical subculture of the bikers (Smith, interview, 1998a). Yet the changes in many of those 70-80 people are remarkable. Many went on to complete some form of post-secondary qualification and enter professions, especially the helping professions of social and welfare work. "They have been moved to think as they didn't before, so it has been an educative process" (Smith, interview, 1998a). Only a biker president who was a transformational leader would consider this the crowning achievement of nearly three decades' work with his club. Typically for a transformational leader, Smith aimed at values and need levels higher than those of the average outlaw biker. He sought to awaken his bikers' need to adopt higher values, and motivated them to act accordingly. His charisma may have been one of the means to this, but higher order thinking and honourable activity among followers have been the ends. In Bass's terms (1985), many God's Squad bikers achieved more than they originally expected, in part because of the trust, admiration and loyalty to Smith which they felt and acted upon.

Difficulties in leadership

The history of God's Squad was not always a happy or smooth one, and various incidents reveal some of Smith's difficulties in leadership. In the bitter 1982 break-up of Truth and Liberation Concern, which will be described in the next chapter, a minority of the Squad, including vice-president Howard Ham, chose to stay with TLC when Smith left. Five years later, in 1987, there was a major exodus from God's Squad of members who felt that Smith as president was becoming domineering and too demanding of their time and energy. One of those who left then was Vic Heyward, who became a God's Squad member at the age of 20 in the early 1980s. He left TLC with Smith in 1982, and rose to be vice-president of God's Squad in 1985. In 1987 he confronted Smith in a club meeting over what he remembers now as a minor issue, but significant in the context of Heyward's increasing concern over what he perceived as Smith's inability to delegate authority and tendency to be unrealistically demanding.

(John) took me aside with Quince and really tore into me over what was the stupidest little thing. Then when I broke down he did his thing of becoming very patronising. As I left the room I heard him say to Quince 'We need a new 2 I/C.' ... Later I went to Quince and asked him how he could justify that sort of behaviour. Quince sort of shrugged and said 'I know, mate, but what can I do about it?' (Heyward, interview, 2001).

Heyward claims he and other executives were stood down at that point and a majority of club members quit God's Squad. Quince (Peter O'Neill) soon left because of domestic tensions over the amount of commitment God's Squad was demanding of him. Heyward and most of those who left at that time formed another club, the Longriders, who still function thirteen years later. In addition they rejoined TLC. God's Squad was able to rebuild its numbers through the recruiting of new and former members, and survived to celebrate its quarter century in 1997. Heyward views his time with God's Squad as a valuable if painful learning experience. His comments reflect an aspect of Smith's personality and character not glimpsed so far:

In the early years after we left TLC I heard John go on and on at club meetings about the betrayal of those who'd stayed at TLC such as Howard Ham, but after a while it began to dawn on me that maybe the same kind of thing could happen with those of us who'd left with him and who held office in the club now. Sure enough, it happened ... Today I don't hold anything against John. He's charismatic and he's magnetic, but in his paranoia he wanted to control everything, he was unable to let go and he sought to keep a stranglehold on it all...I was so busy in God's Squad and CCC activities that my marriage was under strain, but no-one was saying "Hey, you need to look after yourself and your relationships". John could be very scathing about those who claimed that they were getting 'burned out' and couldn't cope. 'Burned out for God!', he would say scathingly ... Fortunately my wife told me I'd better reassess things or I might not have a marriage (Heyward, interview, 2001).

From one perspective, this is a case of the charismatic visionary having little patience with those mere mortals who were not as consumed with implementing the vision as he himself was. From another perspective, that of long-term God's Squad member Bruce 'Ironbark' Chambers, it is a matter of a strong club president doing what he needs to do.

It does require a lot of time and energy to make God's Squad work. When we were all young, single and free there was a lot more willing commitment, [though] John's family suffered and he's still paying the cost of that. But I know a lot of people who by the late 1980s were crying out in anguish about the demands John made on them ... [and] didn't spend a lot of time in their families, even when they could have been with their families. They were out in the garage tinkling with their motorbikes, or wasting time in other ways! People shouldn't blame John for their own weaknesses and neglect (Chambers, interview, 2001).

Chambers stresses that in his thirty years with God's Squad he has never felt dictated to by Smith.

I've sometimes said to him 'this is what I can do, but I can't do that' and he's always been reasonable about it. But a lot of the blokes were working class guys who didn't want any boss to own them. They sought greener pastures elsewhere but often didn't find them (Chambers, interview, 2001).

Eddie Pye, who left God's Squad to form the Apostles Stunt Team in the mid 1970s but remained a supporter of Smith's and an associate of God's Squad, says Smith was a "hard taskmaster" but that he needed to exercise strong "spiritual discipline" if the squad was to achieve respect among outlaw bikers.

It only takes one wrong look or one false word to outlaw bikers and the whole thing is over. You have to understand his commitment. From a spiritual point of view, he was sold out for what he was called to be. For the original seven of us in God's Squad, it wasn't a bother. You had to earn your colours and in some cases that took many years" (Pye, interview, 2001).

Heyward, for his part, felt he could not have survived much longer under Smith's leadership. Heyward says the Longriders exist because club members enjoy being together for friendship's sake, rather than because they want to transform the world as God's Squad under Smith did. He has deliberately kept a distance from God's Squad since he left, finding that as soon as he met someone from God's Squad it brought back the pain and trauma of his time with them. Only once more has he ventured into God's Squad territory.

In 1997 I was surprised [as a member of Longriders] to receive an invitation to the 25th anniversary of God's Squad. Initially I was hesitant to go, not wanting to enter into all that pain again ... I decided to go, though I was anxious about meeting John [Smith] again. I guessed that he would either ignore me or make a big show of me. Eventually he saw me from across the room, and signalled demonstratively to me, then embraced me, told me he loved me, and even called me his son. "What are you talking about?" I said. "I'm not your son!" He talked to me for 15-20 minutes. But I had to ask myself, had he changed? Because in those twenty minutes he didn't ask me anything about myself, my wife, my kids ... nothing to do with me or my life. I decided I just wanted to put this bloke behind me from that point (Heyward, interview, 2001).

Heyward, now a mining chaplain in Newman, WA, admits he cannot deny that John Smith was influential in setting the direction of his life and vocation, but believes he learned more important lessons about surviving in faith and ministry from people who mentored him after Smith. "I learned that in the end we are accountable to God for ourselves and what we do with our lives. That's what helped me survive but I didn't learn that from John Smith. My continuing struggle is for the ones who got burned [in God's Squad] ... and didn't get over it" (Heyward, interview, 2001). Heyward says he is wary of charismatic leaders now.

They think they can do and say whatever they like and be totally unaccountable, a law unto themselves ... When I think of God's Squad it is painful, but these days I mostly think of the friendships. The tragic thing is that John himself could never connect in friendship with any of those blokes who were in God's Squad ... He's a gifted speaker, but a

sad, grumpy old man. He stuffed his own ministry by his inability to confront his own weaknesses (Heyward, interview 2001).

Chambers concedes that:

John is not a great leader in the pastoral sense. He's a dreamer, an ideas person. He needs people who will say to him when necessary, 'No, we can't do that, we haven't got the resources'. I find that he does listen to me, though often he will have made his mind up already. John doesn't see himself as [a pastoral] kind of leader: his gift is in analysis, evangelism, the prophetic, and in communicating ideas in a way that people can understand. He can intimidate, but not in a cruel sense ... he makes you think, and feel uncomfortable (Chambers, interview 2001).

Heyward's comments seem to indicate the presence in Smith of what Conger and Kanungo have called the 'shadow side' of charismatic leadership (Conger and Kanungo, 1998: 211f). They believe leaders' behaviour reflects varying degrees of negative and positive forms of charismatic leadership. Though Smith's dominant form of charisma is positive because of his generally altruistic vision and ethical behaviour, he exhibits some common negative charismatic traits. Autocratic tendencies are evident in his unwillingness to entrust aspects of the implementation of his vision to even long-serving followers. Smith apparently showed unrealistic expectations of followers in his consuming zeal to see his vision fulfilled through God's Squad, and impatience when followers expressed exhaustion. There appears also to be a degree of narcissism revealed in what Heyward discerned as a lack of genuine concern for him beneath Smith's surface warmth and professed love. Narcissism as a disorder is highly correlated with certain attributes of charismatic leaders (Conger and Kanungo 1998: 217). It is sometimes traced to a poor mirroring dynamic in childhood, where children's needs to have their parents recognise and admire them are not properly met. Ken Smith acknowledged that he did not affirm John enough as a child, and Nancy in John's memory constantly withheld approval. Overcompensating in adulthood, narcissistic charismatics may overestimate their capabilities and underestimate the importance of critical skills. They may fail to see deficiencies in their vision, to accept the need for better managerial talent, or to accept responsibility for poor decisions. Exhibitionism, aggression and power-seeking - all common negative charismatic traits - may result.

Clearly there are differing views on the extent to which Smith's charisma has included negative characteristics. Chambers believes Smith's bluster is often misunderstood:

John is not conceited, though he is highly opinionated and can be argumentative. Over 30 years I've seen ... the tender side, the good in him. He's pleasant company, and a man who knows humility. He's a very shy person with an extraordinary gift. He's not an egotist. If he'd wanted to dominate, why choose to stay on and lead a movement on a shoestring like ours? With his mind he could have been a top-flight barrister (Chambers, interview 2001).

The future

God's Squad seems likely to continue. While the biker subculture a decade ago was showing signs of aging and shrinking, there has been a revival in recent years. This can be seen in the major outlaw groups aggressive recruiting of younger men, the current intensity of biker gang warfare over territory and membership, and a resurgence of interest in the lifestyle generally which flows on to help smaller groups such as God's Squad. The latter's credibility in the scene is well established, with the club's functions reported on and photographed in biker lifestyle magazines such as *Live to Ride* and *Men at Work* alongside those of mainstream clubs such as the Rebels and the Bandidos.

Clearly, God's Squad was not an easy or straightforward ministry for Smith. In part this was due to the difficult nature of the mission field and the hard and closed nature of outlaw biker culture. In part it seems also to have been because of flaws within Smith's leadership style: flaws which are sadly typical of the very charismatic giftedness which enabled Smith to get a foothold in the biker scene in the first place. There have always been young, mostly working class men attracted by Smith's vision and self-confidence who are willing to follow him along the transformational path. In some cases disillusionment with Smith comes with maturity, even when, like Vic Heyward, such followers are still living out the transformational vision.

The beginnings of a media profile

A chapter on Smith's ministry with bikers would be incomplete without consideration of one of the major outcomes flowing from his association with such a colourful and notorious subculture: that of Smith's media profile. In the early 1970s the idea of a preacher in full biker regalia associating with a group of long haired, bearded bikers and being thrown out of hotel bars (even though they only drank lemon squash) as 'undesirable' was a great novelty for the media. Newspapers, magazines and television --the visual media-- were eager to give coverage of God's Squad from its inception. The public launching of the Victorian God's Squad chapter was announced in John Sorrell's daily column in the Melbourne *Herald*, and Mike Willesee followed with a segment on Channel 9's *A Current Affair*. Thus began John Smith's media profile. A scrapbook kept in Smith's Melbourne headquarters shows the swift development of this profile during 1972-3, as newspapers in cities and districts through south-eastern Australia featured the story. There were more than 800 newspaper and magazine articles in the period up until 1997. "We courted and made use of the secular media intentionally", Smith admits

(email communication, 2000). The strategy was to handle the media wherever possible from an unpredictable rather than a predictable position. If there was a stereotype to be broken, they would break it; if there was an 'angle' different from the conventional religious one they would take it, and the media usually responded. Above all, Smith and his followers were given attention for achieving what the church or the government found difficult. "Redeeming the streets always gets attention," says Smith (interview, 1998a). The media appreciate transformational vision and leadership where they are convinced it is genuine.

We had virtually a decade of getting media attention whenever we wanted it on every kind of major issue within the nation, and that's not something the church has done well. We really did impact the nation -- for a while (Smith, interview, 2000b).

Though the attention started to decrease in the late 1980s, John Smith as an individual was still sought as a spiritual and sociological pundit on television. He had a regular timeslot on the Seven Network's national *The Bert Newton Show*; appeared on radio (e.g. Caroline Jones' *Search for Meaning*); and in newspapers, notably as one of two writers in the 1990s of *The Age*'s Saturday Reflection leaders, where editorials were angled towards higher order themes of ethics, spirituality or social justice. He was interviewed in depth by two of Australia's leading media sceptics, the ABC's Phillip Adams and Terry Lane. The interview with Lane was reviewed in Melbourne's *The Age*, which declared Lane "the best interviewer in Australia". Journalist Barry Hill called the interview "a very even match and very revealing of Lane. It was an interview where Smith's articulation of his values had checked Lane as if he had met limitations of his own life head on" (Hill, 1985). Lane, himself from a conservative evangelical background long since abandoned, told Hill that what he found fascinating about John Smith was that "despite having a similar background (to me) he has that much more personal liberty. He's free to make friends with Hell's Angels whereas I wouldn't be. I'd be constantly shocked and offended" (Hill, 1985).

Smith is still asked for comment when matters concerning outlaw bikers are in the news:

The media, knowing our long-term relationship to the outlaw scene, seeks [God's Squad, for which Smith is spokesperson] out in times of sensational biker events for information, sociological and anthropological analysis of biker and youth violence (Smith, personal communication, 2000).

Occasionally in the early days media exposure caused trouble within the biker scene. Smith recalls an early occasion where the Melbourne *Herald* ran a feature article about God's Squad and its mission. The journalist added, of his own accord and for extra colour, that God's Squad's love would be tested when they challenged the Hell's Angels

with the gospel. Coming as it did before God Squad's acceptance by the Hell's Angels at the 1974 Sunbury Festival, this remark might have been interpreted by the Angels as an affront or encroachment, and could have elicited a violent response (Smith, 1987: 162).

In a previous chapter I noted the deliberate way in which the Jesus Movement in Australia set out to bring Jesus of Nazareth before the Australian public and pursue its ideological goals of promoting social justice and a better deal for marginalised groups. Reflecting on John Smith's personal media profile it is clear that, with the exception of the very early media exposure when the novelty of God's Squad was the selling point, his media input has been essentially an extension of his transformational thrust. He has used media opportunities such as those with *The Age* to challenge people to seek meaning and purpose in their lives, rather than purely material goals. This general thrust can be found in the great majority of his syndicated radio spots, hundreds of thirty second and sixty second announcements on socio-cultural and ethical issues, played on more than one hundred radio stations, often in public service programming slots. Some of these have been published in book form as *This is John Smith* (Smith, 1992). The same can be said of his various paperback publications. *Advance Australia Where?* addresses what Smith calls Australia's "cosmic orphanhood" (Smith, 1989: 25), the loneliness of a nation with its head in the sand, and challenges the Australian church to a prophetic ministry to the poor and marginalised. *Cutting Edge* challenges a British readership to many of the same ideals, and urges the church to forego privilege and power in favour of prophetic advocacy in an "analgesic society" (Smith, 1992: 169). Each book has been adorned with colourful portraits of Smith in full outlaw biker regalia, usually mounted on a Harley Davidson motorcycle. Thus he uses a charismatic media image to sell his transformational message.

In the 1990s John Smith's media profile extended to international proportions. As he was invited to speak in Europe regularly at the U.K.'s annual Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival and at a similar forum in Amsterdam, his reputation spread. Again the biker image made for a spectacular picture story to begin with, such as in Britain's conservative *Church Times* (Smith, newspaper, 1992: 8), and again Smith easily turned the novelty into an opportunity to speak out on a range of serious subjects, both social and ethical. At Greenbelt he met and was admired by the Irish rock group U2, three of whose members are Christians. For a time U2 singer Bono Vox and guitarist/composer The Edge adopted Smith as an unofficial chaplain and carried audio tapes of his addresses around the world with them. Smith also connected with Tony Campolo, a popular U.S. preacher and sociology professor who was personal spiritual adviser to U.S. President Bill Clinton. Campolo was an influential sponsor of Smith's entry into the U.S. scene. By the end of the century Smith's syndicated radio spots were being played on stations in

the U.K., continental Europe, Pakistan, and some African countries. Though spoken only in English, they are still popular today.

John Smith's prolonged period of doctoral studies in the U.S. (1996-2000) has slowed his media involvement, though throughout this time he continued to research, write and perform the syndicated radio spots. It remains to be seen whether following his return to Australia this aspect of his career will be revived, or whether his time in the media spotlight has passed. In more sophisticated times the image of the Christian biker carries less novelty and makes less of an impact than it did in the 1970s. Reporters are seemingly less enthralled by Smith's loud and flamboyant image and will assess him more simply according to the content of his organisation's achievements. Smith has the skills and ability to work through the media in a more conventional behind-the-scenes manner, as he proved with his editorials for *The Age*, but it may be difficult for one so used to relying on charismatic panache to do the plodding, low-profile work involved in more routine accessing of the media.

CHAPTER 7

Truth and Liberation Concern: Building an Alternative Church

John Smith's life in 1972 was that of a biker, a preacher and a leader and organiser within the Jesus Movement as it took shape in Australia. Out of all this began to grow an alternative Christian community which in time became a local church. Named Truth and Liberation Concern, it began as the informal ministry operating out of the Smiths' Boronia home in 1972. The name was an allusion to the giveaway newspaper and to the letters TLC, a fashionable early-1970s acronym for tender loving care, which is what the Jesus Movement hoped to offer people. The Smiths' address was published in the newspaper, which ran to 35,000 copies and was circulated in prisons, alternative communities, churches, and handed out on the streets. The Smiths' home became very accessible therefore to hippies, bikers, ex-prisoners, street people, or anyone in need of help, attracting "all sorts of desperate men and women [who would] turn up on our doorstep" (Smith, 1987: 176).

As well as the God's Squad meeting on Monday nights, the Smiths held an open Bible study meeting on Wednesdays. The house was packed with drug users and bikers, to the dismay of the neighbours in this quiet suburban street, and to the potential jeopardy of the Smith family. With Glena expecting her third child and exhausted from overwork and stress, a separate place for the outreach had to be found. Methodist contacts helped to find a derelict weatherboard house, once used for Methodist meetings, on an acre of land at 265 Canterbury Road in nearby Bayswater. It was redecorated in shades of orange, some of its interior walls were knocked down to make a larger meeting area, and it was dubbed the 'Jesus Light and Power House'. The rent to the Methodist church was a nominal \$5 a week, which according to the trustee, John U'Ren, was rarely paid (U'Ren, interview, 2000). Eventually a local doctor, impressed by TLC's work, helped them to buy the property outright from the Methodist Church at a cost of \$12,000.¹⁰ From the time of moving into Bayswater, the work grew exponentially. Before long the house was being used as an informal hostel by night for the homeless, who would be woken and dragged from their grubby blankets to make way for the day-care and counselling centre in the day. In turn it was a meeting venue in the evenings. Smith constantly feared visits from the health authorities, but somehow the place remained

¹⁰ The church had been offered \$40,000 for the property by a supermarket chain, but such was the support for Smith's work from local Methodist congregations that the denomination preferred to sell it more cheaply to TLC.

opened and functioning through the 1970s. Eventually it became too small and Smith had to teach the Bible from the verandah, as hundreds of people sat outside. My own memory is of the atmosphere of the place, which was makeshift and decrepit but fascinating. This was, surely, something like the way the church must have been in pre-Constantinian times: homespun and informal yet charged with an impressive energy. Smith wrote:

We attracted people from all over the city, often people who had found faith and meaning through the work of the centre, but found it difficult to fit in with the traditional church patterns where they lived. Together with them came a lot of people who were hearing the gospel for the first time in language and images they could understand (Smith, 1987: 215).

Bruce Chambers first attended TLC as a 17 year-old in 1972. He had unsuccessfully tried to introduce a non-Christian friend to his local Church of Christ. "It wasn't working, so I took him along to Truth and Liberation, where I had been invited by contacts from God's Squad. I found John Smith to be a most amazing man, able to bring the scriptures and the gospel alive in a special way" (Chambers, interview, 2001).

In transformational terms, Smith was bringing to people's consciousness a sense of their desire for spiritual identity and idealistic purpose. People were attracted by the gospel or his charisma, or both, and led to the point where they could define their needs and values meaningfully. The result was motivation to purposeful action such as: protest; commitment to compassionate acceptance of people; and efforts to help transform society.

Initially those attending included a majority of young males, mostly working class in origin. As TLC grew the mix broadened. More girls and women came, and more highly educated and middle-class people, equally disaffected with mainstream church, started to attend. This was an instance of Burns' 'heroic' brand of transforming leadership at work. People who were bored or apathetic in their denominational church membership were excited when they heard Smith. Some who were alienated from faith and church were re-connected through his vital presentation; and others who had become passive or lazy in their Christian living were inspired into active discipleship. Eventually the centre began to have many of the hallmarks of a lively local church.

Herein lay another learning experience: for years Smith did not accept that TLC was a church. His conditioning as a Methodist minister's son was to feel he must not undercut the existing denominations. In any case as a charismatic leader he did not

relish dealing with the routine aspects of setting up a conventional church. He tried to refer converts to local branches of mainstream church denominations, believing this was the right and honourable course. However Smith soon found the converts did not fit with established church culture. Besides, local ministers felt they were unable to cope with all the new converts being sent, some of them with major psychological or social problems. Some of the converts refused to join a church, indicating that they considered the Monday night meetings their 'church'. They therefore remained unaccountable to any pastoral authority. When Smith met with some of the local ministers, it was agreed that TLC should become a local church offering Sunday worship and the various Christian sacraments. So in 1974 Sunday afternoon worship began, complete with teaching sessions of up to 90 minutes' length, usually from Smith.

Smith reflects now that the immediate success of TLC raises the question of whether he should have 'planted' branch churches in other places, beginning in effect a new denomination.

I didn't want to because I'm a preacher's kid and I had this thing where I wanted to feed people into the existing local churches, [but] it never really worked. Now I look back, and trying to grow churches is much harder unless you're going to do a prosperity doctrine thing. So if I'd done it back when we began I think we would have seen an extraordinary [growth]. I think we would have cleaned out the churches to be honest with you, if only we had gone for it then (Smith, interview, 2000).

Smith even had denominational pastors writing to him, offering to come and work in the movement. He refused their offers, but senses in retrospect that this might have been a mistake, given that in western nations denominational loyalties have rapidly broken down anyway. From the perspective of today's 'church-planting' era, Smith could easily have begun a series of churches and had ready-trained pastors come to work with him as colleagues. Such an initiative may indeed have "cleaned out" local churches in the short term, but how secondary congregations would have fared in the long term without the charismatic Smith as their actual pastor (he could only be in one fellowship at a time) is questionable. Would these mostly young and rebellious people, hungry as they were for a vital role model, have been satisfied with only occasional visits from Smith as a denominational figurehead? And, given the limitations of Smith's political and people-handling skills at that time, would he have been able to maintain control of a network of congregations in the way that Wesley did?

Experiences of guidance

During a trip to the United States in 1973, sponsored by an airline pilot who had joined his resources group, Smith spent time with several of the key U.S. Jesus Movement leaders, including Professor Jack Sparks of Berkeley's Christian World Liberation Front, and Episcopalian priest Graham Pulkingham, who headed the Church of the Redeemer in Houston, Texas, with its large and remarkable community. During this trip Smith underwent two significant religious experiences of the kind that would later stand him in good stead as a charismatic leader. These included one of prophecy in Houston, when a message was spoken to him about an asthma attack his son Paul proved to be having back in Australia. There was also an incident when he woke one morning to be struck by the immediacy of an idea which he was convinced was from God: that when he returned to Melbourne he was to drop his regular preaching style -- a mix of topical and biblical references with contemporary quotations and anecdotes -- and "begin teaching straight from the Bible" (Smith, 1987: 220). He believes God led him supernaturally to start with the book of Acts, which he did upon his return. As the story of the development of the earliest church, Acts became a text book for the new TLC church in forming a Christian community from a biblically illiterate and for the most part unchurched group of people. These experiences of personal guidance and prophecy were helpful to Smith not just in the immediate context of his family's welfare and a direction for the new congregation, but later when it came to ministering within the neo-Pentecostal movement. Smith was confident that he could be counted as one of those who had personally experienced both the baptism of the Holy Spirit (see incident recounted in Chapter 3) and now also the 'gifts of the Spirit' in action, which gave him a certain status with neo-Pentecostals. These experiences added to the overall self-assurance which Smith needed for a ministry which he himself understood as apostolic. They were also the closest thing Smith had to the mysterious initiatory experiences Weber described as being typical in the preparation of a charismatic leader.

As Smith obeyed the prompting to teach the book of Acts the number of followers grew to 500 on Wednesday nights, with people sitting outside the TLC building on blankets and pillows. As more people became believers Smith and others would be up until the early hours counselling them. When the Sunday worship meetings began in 1974, with Smith teaching St Paul's various epistles in the same direct way, it was soon realised that expanded accommodation was necessary. With no capital, they decided in the mid 1970s to build a place for themselves, making their own mud-bricks to build a beam and mud-brick structure to seat more than 500 people. Designed by Alistair Knox, it was the largest such structure in Australia in

the 1980s, with office and eating space and two large kitchen fireplaces set in the walls of the meeting hall. A farmer from the congregation provided the timber for the beams and for the two twelve-foot-high wooden doors. It took about five years to complete, with TLC members doing most of the skilled and unskilled labour and providing the materials. In decorating the interior Glenna Smith worked hard to ensure a warm, lounge style atmosphere. The overall result was what David Millikan, in his watershed book on Australian spirituality, *The Sunburnt Soul* (1980), called "the most uniquely Australian urban church in the country. It is a triumph of volunteer labour and ingenuity. It has a rough open warmth. There is a sense of strength from the great oregon doors and beams. But it is also homely. People move around in it as if they are at home" (Millikan, 1981: 95). The building, he noted, was constructed debt-free for under \$60,000, "a combination of cooperative endeavour and vision". It was a structure that suited the collective personality of its inhabitants and lent them status in the wider church community, which admired the building's originality and integrity as an expression of truly Australian design. Significantly, it was a building that was not going to detract from John Smith's charismatic authority by making him look like just another pastor putting up another ordinary church building. A new building it might have been, but being exotic in its originality and individualism, it only added to Smith's aura as a special leader. Nor did it compromise his transformational stance: the building expressed the ideal of a genuinely indigenous Christianity for contemporary Australia, which had been built at a fraction of the usual cost of a church building, so that more resources could be deployed in helping people rather than in facilities.

The split from Truth and Liberation Concern

In his enthusiastic praise for Truth and Liberation Concern as an "extraordinary" example of "Christianity with a strong voice, a sharp social awareness and a capacity for practical action" (Millikan, 1981: 99), David Millikan may not have been aware of the tremendous pressures which were developing in this fast-growing new suburban church: pressures that in many ways were typical of those experienced in churches with charismatic founders. Attendances were now reaching up to 800, and Smith found it necessary to recruit a team of pastors. Mike Peele, a genial, self-assured Canadian teacher with a background in business and the North American counter-culture, and Ian Clarkson, an experienced South Australian Uniting Church minister and counsellor, were two of those he appointed. For TLC Peele's appointment was that of a pastor who would faithfully lead them into the next century. For Smith it was an appointment which he would later rue as a threat to his control as TLC leader.

It was one of the weaknesses of the growing Jesus Movement all over the world that major leadership appointments were frequently made under phenomenal pressure and at ill-advised speed. Crisis decision-making led to many disasters, not only for us (Smith, 1987: 217).

John U'Ren's observation is that Smith drew around him similarly charismatically gifted leaders, who shared the Jesus Movement's ideological tendency toward individualism and lack of discipline, and who like Smith himself were reacting against denominational and institutional structures and methods. "Some of the TLC leaders have similar personalities (to John), and they were powerful. These people draw each other to each other" (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

To cope with the increasing numbers of homeless people, TLC bought a property called Montrose House, further up in the Dandenong ranges. Several married couples successively led this venture of providing a home for many who had been sleeping on the floor of the old building in Bayswater. Advocacy work was undertaken in the children's and other courts, and counselling offered to some of Melbourne's most seriously troubled people. Peter 'Quince' O'Neill ran a youth group for those considered too wild for regular church youth groups. "As a movement, we were into everything" Smith wrote (Smith, 1987: 233). Since the election of the Whitlam Government at the end of 1972 idealism had been running high, and TLC expected that the State would back initiatives for the poor and disadvantaged, which for a while it did. But as the Whitlam experiment foundered in the mid 1970s it became clear that church groups would have to support such work themselves.

As well as financial pressure there was growing tension within the team of pastors, where Smith's strongly individualistic approach to ministry was losing favour. Mike Peele maintains that they were moving toward a concept of corporate leadership where leaders were expected to be in submission to each other, as well as to God. Peele adds that as TLC was by then a local church and not just a base for Smith's ministry, he and others had a pastoral concern for every member of the church. They believed the purpose of TLC now was "to live together in love and fellowship" (Peele, personal communication, 2001), rather than to be a base for the ministry of any one leader. Peele says they knew and loved John and had worked around his more individualistic and demanding traits for years, but friction was growing (Peele, personal communication, 2001). Tensions within TLC began to reach breaking point when, as in God's Squad, Smith's idealistic expectations of followers were not always met.

We had grown out of a decade of unprecedented idealism, so that when our high expectations of people and events weren't fulfilled, it led to disillusionment and bitterness for some people. Internal leadership problems raised their heads. And because we were independent, we didn't have access to external arbitration and discipline which might have helped heal the rift. We were a frontier organisation with a distrust amounting at times to paranoia of anything which smacked of authority and rigid structure (Smith, 1987: 238-9).

If Smith was beginning to feel intuitively the need to somehow routinise TLC as a support base for his vision, he was faced with a group of counter-cultural fellow leaders with an increasingly different vision who would instinctively resist. The problems in TLC can be seen as classical tensions of a prophetic visionary trying to protect his vision from what he regarded as attempts at modification by subsidiary leaders. Smith's perception was that his original vision for TLC and the Jesus Movement in Melbourne generally was not being held to or implemented strongly enough. Transformational leaders discern inconsistencies between their organisation's core values -- essentially their own -- and its actual behaviour, and exploit that tension for increased performance by pointing to it publicly and urging followers to 'lift their game'. This was the way Smith perceived the situation. His fellow leaders, on the other hand, believed that John was arguing his case in a vindictive and destructive way by continually berating the church and some individuals in his preaching. The self-effacing Mike Peele was the natural leader of resistance, but the spokesperson was Morris Stuart, a recent British immigrant, and another powerful and articulate personality drawn into the movement. TLC had welcomed Stuart into its fold at Smith's insistence, because Stuart's outspoken and radical views had led to controversy and conflict in conventional church and parachurch groups such as Scripture Union, both in the United Kingdom and in Australia. Smith claims:

Mike was the incipient leader, but Morris Stuart was the one firing the bullets. The irony of it is that when Morris had come to us it was John U'Ren and I who had fought to take him in, because it was part of our theology to accept people and love them and not to reject people who were hurt. Mike Peele was very opposed to us taking him on, so it was very bazaar when Morris turned around and became the enemy, so to speak. Mike Peele is ... the kind of guy that has enormous power ... to control people from an armchair. So the hit man from that point became Morris Stuart and any communication from that point came from Morris Stuart, even though he was completely new to the movement and knew nothing of its history (Smith, interview, 2000a).

Morris Stuart recalls that the tensions in TLC were in "full flight" when he arrived in the church, and that Smith asked him to "hold things together" when he, Smith, went to Adelaide on mission early in 1982. As the year progressed and Smith

postponed his return until September, Stuart's perception was that TLC was a group of people who were "tremendously loyal" to Smith as the founder of their movement, but who were rapidly maturing and starting to question the appropriateness of the hero-worship they had given Smith and the automatic acceptance of his words (Stuart, personal communication, 2001). If Smith had understood Stuart to be on his side and in some way deputising for him when he left for Adelaide, this would explain his [Smith's] bitterness to this day at Stuart's becoming by the end of 1982 a spokesman for Peele and the other elders of TLC. Mike Peele does not want to get involved in debate over what happened in 1982. He stresses only that Smith had by now a very different understanding of TLC's purpose from the rest of the leadership, and that he (Smith) eventually chose to resign against their advice and pleading (Peele, personal communication, 2001).

U'Ren points to Smith's paradoxical personality¹¹ as a major reason for the increasing tensions which developed at TLC:

I had worked with John in forming the constitution of TLC, which was drawn up by the legal firm McCrackens. John had a rule, a criterion: he was to be one amongst equals with the right of veto in decision-making. This put him on a collision course with TLC. He had an inadequate theology of *ecclesia*, or of servant leadership. Yet paradoxically, he was the one who was sitting in the gutter with needy people, always with an openness to whoever had need, and a great sense of compassion. But if you tried to protect him or didn't allow needy people access to him, he would rip people apart. He was full of paradoxes: he was Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Amos all rolled into one. He believed so passionately in his mission that he would compare himself to some of the saints. Every sermon began to have criticism of [Prime Minister] Malcolm Fraser as its agenda, but I believe the day you begin to personalise evil you start to bring dishonour to the gospel (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

U'Ren states that Peele was the one who usually had to "mop up" and bring equilibrium to TLC after Smith's prophetic outbursts. "John was an outstanding prophet, but with feet of clay. Mike's attitude became cynical and disloyal at the

¹¹ This apparent paradox of the fierce prophet coexisting in an individual personality with the gentle pastor may not be so unusual. The Enneagram's No.8 personality is the 'boss' type, the natural leader, who feels an acute sense of justice, particularly on behalf of those weaker than him or herself (Palmer, 1995: 199ff). But while protective and gentle toward those perceived as weaker, this personality can be --in its less 'redeemed' forms -- merciless with those perceived as either rivals or as sources of injustice. Rather than trying to reform the system from within, this type of person prefers to throw boulders at it from without (Rohr, 1990: 147-150). A biblical prophet such as Elijah or John the Baptist might be a typical example. Could it be that Smith, as a self-confessed No. 8 personality (Smith, interview, 1998a), saw the equally strong Malcolm Fraser as responsible for injustice and as a rival for influence over his people, and felt constrained to offer on-going and fierce criticism? Equally, this type of personality draws energy from engaging in conflict with others to test them out. He/she delights in attacking, perceiving as playful what others perceive as downright aggressive (Rohr, 1990:148), thus constantly risking misunderstanding of his/her motives. Smith possibly assumed that his congregation drew as much satisfaction from his thundering condemnations of public figures as he himself did, not realising that meeker souls were offended by them.

heart of things. But none of us is perfect" (U'Ren, interview, 2000). Peele asserts that he and his fellow pastors could not stand by and let TLC members be hurt by Smith's public criticism of their attitude and performance, which Peele says by the early 1980s was excessive.

U'Ren claims that throughout this time Smith's private life was generally disordered, with little in the way of structures or personal disciplines:

John was quite a driven person and setting aside space for reflection was not a natural discipline. Setting goals to him was what the church establishment or institutions were about. He was verging on having a messianic sense of calling, with a propensity to accept every invitation (to speak publicly) that came his way. In my opinion these personal characteristics have been his Achilles heel for some time (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

U'Ren believes the evangelical culture of the 1960s, expressed through organisations like Campaigners for Christ, developed people who lacked an ability to reflect and listen. "TLC too was full of action but not much reflection. John was strongly individualistic, not a team player. Unless a person has a reflective praxis, you find generally that there's not a very happy team or community around them" (U'Ren, interview, 2000). All this is typical of the charismatic leader's negative side, as described by Conger: passion and a sense of urgency for carrying out their mission sometimes overshadow the importance of considering the needs of followers and peers. Conventional institutional procedures are anathema. The intensity of living in the present for the future vision is such that consideration of long-term maintenance of self, family or organisation is overlooked, often to the detriment of relationships.

U'Ren was throughout the 1980s the Victorian state director of Scripture Union, an organisation working alongside the mainline Protestant churches in evangelism and outreach. Through these years he remained the (unordained) minister of the Methodist church in Montrose, in Melbourne's outer east. He never joined the inner circle of elders at TLC, preferring to remain at Montrose and act as an advocate for John where needed. As a result, he believed when the problems started to escalate that he was not the right person to arbitrate.

The culture of the Jesus Movement was that they listened with suspicion to 'establishment' people like me. The ideology was that the guru must speak, so I thought they might listen to a gifted guy named Floyd McClung, of the international Youth With a Mission (YWAM) organisation who was visiting New Zealand at the time. I organised for him to visit Melbourne for 10 days in 1981 (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

McClung consulted with the various parties and concluded that TLC was “between a rock and a hard place” (U’Ren, interview, 2000). He decided that the TLC elders should be stood down for a period, and advised Smith, for his part, to examine himself. “He said to get down and search my heart out for every failure as a leader and just look them in the face and apologise, and they’ll do the same to you. Well, I did, and they didn’t. I knew I was in strife then”, Smith recalls (interview, 2000a). McClung seems to have misread the extent to which the Australian Jesus Movement was more anti-structural and anti-establishment than the international movement.

There was considerable slackness about [the Australian movement], a wanting to ‘hang loose’ in the jargon of the day. When it came to applying the constitution of TLC, nobody wanted to even read it, let alone apply it. ‘Who tells God?’ was their attitude (U’Ren, interview, 2000).

Were the leaders of TLC forced to abide by their constitution? “As an establishment person you didn’t want to put a gun to their head because it would have been counterproductive” (U’Ren, interview, 2000).

Smith chose in early 1982, against McClung’s advice, to go on mission to Adelaide, where a successful outreach programme in secondary schools made for a welcome reprieve from dealing with the tensions at TLC. He stayed in Adelaide for seven months and as a result his leadership at home was further threatened. When he left Howard ‘Spiv’ Ham took over the presidency of God’s Squad. Smith claims that after he had left for Adelaide, McClung sent the TLC leaders a letter urging them not to treat each other as the enemy:

It included a description of a Pentecostal-type vision he’d had of me fighting this lizard-like creature. ‘Everyone’s is looking for the monster on John’s back, but nobody, while nobody can see the snake in the grass’. He felt that God had said: the devil is trying to tear you apart. God is doing a great thing through this. You guys must not look at each other because you are not the enemy. The enemy is the snake in the grass. Well, they never responded to him. They ignored his letter (Smith, interview, 2000a).

Smith asserts that after he returned from Adelaide, reclaiming the God’s Squad presidency from a resistant Ham, he was “never let back in” to TLC. “Basically the pulpit was withheld from me” (Smith, interview, 2000a). By then Smith felt it was too late to sort out all the tensions that had arisen in TLC and on November 11, 1982 he resigned. While the church elders and overseers struggled behind the scenes, the leadership problems remained largely invisible to the TLC membership, who were wondering why Smith had stayed in Adelaide so long. Smith believes people were very angry when they found out what had happened.

U'Ren, whom Floyd McClung had appointed as acting pastoral oversight person when the TLC elders had been asked to temporarily step down, was by now acting as the main go-between for the parties. He says the TLC pastors resolved not to accept John's resignation.

We reckoned that if we couldn't resolve the problem, it would let John off the accountability hook, and then what kind of leader could he ever be? But John left the meeting, wrote his resignation and sent it to the elders, who had been stood down by McClung. They broke the agreement and accepted the resignation. Then they ... closed ranks and wouldn't enter into any correspondence. John was given termination pay and then accused of misusing money. This was to do with a loan I had organised for John, to be repaid to the Uniting Church¹². A donation given back in 1974 to pay out the loan came [directly] from Glena's brother, and the trustees claimed on legal advice that donation should have gone into the movement (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

Once again, the casual practices of the 'laid back' counter-cultural TLC were causing confusion and providing scope for accusation. As has been seen, Conger points to poor administrative practice as typical in many charismatically led organisations.

Reflecting on the split

Looking back on the split 15 years later, Smith reflects:

I walked away from Truth and Lib. I knew of no way to deal with my theology about power and [at the same time] do what I would have had to do to hold it. I would have had no trouble [holding it], because ninety per cent of the congregation would have backed me to the hilt if I'd been willing to stand up and simply say to the guys who'd been giving me trouble: "Out of here!" But I couldn't do that, because I had this 'weakness of power/power of weakness' paradigm, and a lot of the Bonhoeffer type influence from *Life Together* and books like that which had profoundly influenced me (Smith, interview, 1998a).

McClung had warned Smith that if he went to Adelaide in 1982 he might lose control of TLC but he chose not to act on the warning. Smith rues now that before he left for Adelaide he did not heed the early signals of strife and do what his early role model John Wesley had done in effectively routinising the Methodist movement. Wesley's journals show that for its first six years the Methodist movement grew rather chaotically (in Parker, 1980: 129-145). Wesley moved quickly to establish structures, frameworks, theological statements, sectors of ministry and distinct routines, and led and administered them strongly. This is perhaps the kind of skill that Burns is talking about when he says that transforming leaders of the reforming

¹² The Methodist Church had become part of the Uniting Church of Australia after union with the Presbyterian and Congregational churches in 1977.

kind need considerable political abilities to manage divisions in their ranks and to plan strategies (Burns 1978: 169).

However in 1982 Smith seems to have lacked such political and organisational skills. Being a reforming leader, he was concerned to act within the moral framework of his ideals. Thus he was afraid of being considered ruthless and dictatorial, two qualities which were anathema to counter-culture movements generally, and to Smith's understanding of leadership in particular. His hesitation, coupled with his absence from Melbourne, gave those in opposition to him scope to challenge his foundational leadership. Had he postponed his time in Adelaide and acted to routinise TLC the outcome might have been different. Reflecting on this in July 2000, Smith commented:

If I knew then what I know now, frankly I would have taken the risk of being called a dictator, which is what charismatic leaders always seem to be called when things go wrong. My mistake was that I didn't routinise things early enough. If you haven't got the thing in ... routinisation you tear one another apart because the thing is so full of energy, and the energy turns in on itself and loses the focus outwards and becomes self-destructive inwards, and that's what happened with TLC. I let the thing get out of control, and then of course it went too far and I would say that ... TLC ... never routinised until they found the common enemy in me (Smith, interview, 2000a).

When charismatic leadership relationships founder, there is the potential for more bitterness and disillusionment than with other more depersonalised forms of leadership. This is because followers and subsidiary leaders have expected so much from their leader him/herself, rather than from the office of leadership. The romantic illusion of heroism, once effectively undermined, tends to shatter vehemently and, for the participants, with all the emotion of a broken love affair, which is essentially what the relationship has been.

Morris Stuart, coming as he did into TLC at a mature age in 1981, sees the split in less emotional terms than many of those involved in the more idealistic 1970s. He resists such emotional terms as 'enemy', claiming that Smith was not considered the enemy by the TLC elders, and that his leaving was, from their point of view, unnecessary.

If you're looking for the reason for his resigning, you'd have to look somewhere between John's neck and the top of his head, because that's the only place it can be found. We didn't want him to resign, and tried at various meetings with him to dissuade him from doing so. There was great loyalty to him among the membership of TLC. They had given him their heart and soul. It was a shock to us when he resigned. ... I believe that in 1982 there was, for the first time, a group of people who were

John's match and loved him enough to confront him, and stick with him (Stuart, personal communication, 2001).

Stuart's statement begs the question as to why, if the elders did not want Smith to resign, they ever accepted his resignation. Stuart admits that, from the elders' point of view, if Smith had stayed changes in the way TLC was structured would have been necessary. "There would probably have needed to be some division of tasks: the separation of [John's] peripatetic function, perhaps" (Stuart, personal communication, 2001).

Smith's travelling ministry seems to have been a point of contention in the split. Could someone who spent considerable amounts of time in other parts of the country do justice to the role of TLC's 'hands on' leader? Stuart suggests Smith could have remained a 'founding father' figurehead while he travelled widely, but not the church's principal leader (personal communication, 2001). Bruce 'Ironbark' Chambers, however, insists that from 1972 there had been an acceptance that John as leader would always be sent out from TLC for periods of mission, and that in the early years this caused no problem.

It was a privilege to send John out to work with other churches. We were never under the illusion that he could operate only within one suburban church. His capability is uncontainable, and anything which compromises sending him out on mission would be tantamount to hiding a lamp under a bushel. It was disappointing to see him having his wings clipped (Chambers, interview, 2001).

Ironically, considering his personality and the verbal bullying of which he was being accused by the subsidiary TLC leaders, Smith believes he was terribly timid about being a leader. He claims:

I never wanted to be a leader, and it was only (having) the vision that made me a leader. I really didn't want power, but I didn't want the vision to be destroyed, I wanted it fulfilled. So if somebody stepped in the way of the vision I could be a bit narky and I probably wasn't always very pastoral. I probably burned some people out, without meaning to (Smith, interview, 2000a).

If this is putting it mildly, it is probably nevertheless an accurate understanding of what happened. The charismatic leader, though he/she is wary of accepting the responsibility that goes with leadership, will fight for his/her vision like a mother for her child, without necessarily being aware of whether his/her response is excessive.

Correspondence

Smith wrote a series of letters to the TLC leadership over the following months, seeking a way forward, but claims he received no written replies. Stuart counters that the TLC elders did not see the need to reply formally when they were still seeing Smith regularly and inviting him to sit down and talk with them. On October 22, 1982, three weeks before he resigned, Smith wrote suggesting that, in view of the clear differences that had emerged, he “phase out financially” from TLC over a six-month period to the point where his role in the church was honorary. When he received no response, he wrote to the elders on November 11 to tender his resignation. In this letter he claimed that his faults had overshadowed his “commitment, pastoral love, care and faithfulness” in the minds of some of his colleagues. He believed “long-range and broader reasons for the problems have been laid aside while much care and attention has been given to my style and character” (Smith, letter, 11-11-82). He referred to claims that his preaching style was labelled as berating and hurtful, saying he found it increasingly difficult to minister in an atmosphere of innuendo, gossip and criticism. Such currents “robbed me of a desire to fight back into a role which is not clearly and enthusiastically evident to me” (letter, 11-11-82). Peele believes Smith’s attitude at this point was typical of the charismatic’s tendency to develop a persecution complex, and to interpret any criticism as personal. “It’s part of ... the nature of the beast” (Peele, personal communication, 2001).

In each of these letters Smith referred to “the needs of this nation in such crisis times, weighing heavily upon me” (Smith, letter, 11-11-82), a reference not just to life under Malcolm Fraser but to the increasing secularisation of Australia. In a letter to the Pastors (elders) on January 7, 1983 he offered to join them for discussion on the nature of leadership and authority, “but only on the condition that my previous leadership is first restored” (Smith, letter, 07-01-83). Significantly, he differentiated himself from them in that while they were “called” to their roles, he was “sent” to his mission to the gentiles long before they were called. Here he was claiming his apostolic calling (apostolic referring to the pioneering role of ‘one sent’ in New Testament Greek) over and against their eldership (elders in the New Testament being local home-grown leaders) calling. Such apostolic calling could only be reviewed or recalled by God, he told them, not by his staff or fellow workers. His resignation from TLC did not include a laying down of his apostolic call, he wrote. This call he intended to follow now either alone or “with a group of brothers and sisters who would share that vision without the spirit of competition” (Smith, letter, 07-01-83). Morris Stuart comments that the TLC elders never had any argument with Smith’s understanding of his own apostleship. “No-one ever challenged that,

and it has nothing to do with his resignation. He was trying to out-manoeuvre people with his theologising" (Stuart, personal communication, 2001).

Smith's comments do seem, however, to confirm his claim that he was ambivalent about leadership for its own sake but that, again typically for a charismatic leader, he held fast to an understanding of his divine calling. They indicate too that it was his transformational vision he was determined to pursue rather than, necessarily, the TLC leadership itself. He wanted his leadership restored, but only in terms of the visionary, pioneering and God-ordained apostolic function, so necessary in his view for the good of the nation, let alone for the church. The implication is that the elders were interfering with his moral and prophetic call to the people of Australia.

To the secular mind Smith's claims may seem like the delusions of grandeur to which charismatic leaders sometimes fall prey. Furthermore, his distinction between his own apostolic calling and others' more ordinary vocation to eldership may sound like word-games. However to someone like Smith, steeped in New Testament theology and ecclesiology, the distinction was real. He had little interest at this stage in political or social leadership for its own sake, but exhibited a passion for apostolic ministry and vocation which intrinsically involved prophetic leadership. He would rather have had a smaller group of followers who shared his vision and acknowledged his calling than retain power at TLC if it meant sacrificing vision and vocation. This is not to say that Smith lacked ambition: indeed the claiming of apostolic authority is quite a breathtaking one in the contemporary context. It is the kind of claim that only someone with acknowledged charismatic qualities could make without being widely ridiculed. The fact that many rank and file members of TLC accepted rather than ridiculed this claim is evidence of the charismatic and transformational nature of his leadership.

Writing to the elders on March 4, 1983, Smith called for a "public forum" to be held so that rank and file members of TLC could express their views. It would be something like, he says, the Methodist 'quarterly meetings' where leadership could be questioned by church members. Here Smith is realising the need for traditional structures, and is reaching back into his own experience for a format. In this letter he accused the elders of using the TLC pulpit to attribute guilt for the split to his remaining supporters in the congregation. Again he claimed New Testament support for a differentiation of gifts within the church. "People are equal but gifts and calling are not" (Smith, letter, 04-03-83). Smith received his public forum as a result of this letter.

At the meeting one member got up and said 'Look, God called this man to give us leadership. Stand up if you agree he ought to come back and do it. Ninety per cent of the audience got to their feet. Well, they were ready to lynch the leadership. John U'Ren, I believe, made a tragic mistake at that point because he didn't want to see bloodshed so he said let's cool off, go and pray this over and trust the leaders' wisdom to try and resolve this. He sort of dampened the thing down when the congregation was demanding justice and blood (Smith, interview, 2000a).

Stuart remembers Smith's address to the forum as a "masterly political presentation" which "made mince meat" of the TLC elders, who felt like resigning on the spot (Stuart, personal communication, 2001). They gave themselves a cooling-off period of 24 hours, however, during which they decided not to resign, but instead to respond to Smith and the community in what became known as the "yellow letter" to the congregation.

On May 13, 1983, Smith wrote to the TLC membership as a whole, claiming that in the recent "yellow letter" the elders had given the membership a "mixture of half-truths, total inaccuracies and evasions of the real issues". Their "simplistic analysis of the reasons for the present situation cause me to fear for the future of the movement" (Smith, letter, 13-05-83). The visionary was still trying to protect his vision six months after his resignation. He claimed that he had no alternative but to conclude that the present TLC leadership "conspired over a long period of time to remove me from the primary leadership," and had since his resignation maintained a "'conspiracy of silence' broken only when behind-the-scenes grave threats of action by others has forced an unwilling but necessary response". There had been "a consistent assassination of my character by innuendo", he wrote (Smith, letter, 13-05-83). In this letter he also asked them to drop the name Truth and Liberation Concern, which he still legally owned, and which he believed was no longer appropriate for a church which had "alienated its founder and leader." He warned the congregation of the need to pray for "the kind of leadership necessary to carry TLC through the eighties with vision and theological depth". Years later he commented: "Mike Peele hasn't got a theological bone in his body. He gets up and says let's love everybody but he really hasn't got any strength in that (theological) way at all" (Smith, interview, 2000a). If this seems harsh on Peele, it may be indicative of the charismatic's supreme confidence in his own understanding and scepticism as to whether any subsidiary could 'do it right'. Alternatively, it could be read as the transformational leader's concern that the purity and depth of TLC's vision would suffer theologically without him. Smith is ready to acknowledge the leadership qualities of his opposition in TLC, and especially of Mike Peele, but seems concerned that they lacked the theological and ideological, that is to say transformational, depth that he brought to the leadership.

The new TLC leadership held to its policy of not entering into any formal correspondence with John Smith, or with John U'Ren, who wrote annually to them during the 1980s on the anniversary of Smith's resignation.

At no time, despite many other attempts [by Smith at correspondence] has the leadership written any reply to my correspondence. One brief 'phone call following my resignation, to assure themselves I was gone, was the only response to reason or heartfelt pleadings. John U'Ren kept up a paper war for many years. He begged them for the sake of the gospel to refuse my resignation, which was clearly ... [offered] under extreme duress, but it was to no avail ... All such correspondence ... has been ignored (Smith, email communication, 2000).

Mike Peele believes that by sending a barrage of correspondence Smith and his supporters were trying to embroil TLC in a public war of words, and maintains this was why they never responded to them formally in writing. He suspects Smith wanted to set up a platform from which he could use his powerful gift of persuasion to sway people back to his personal perspective of TLC's direction. Peele stresses, however, that the TLC leaders repeatedly invited John to sit down with them and work through the problems privately, which Peele considers is the obviously scriptural way for Christians to go about dealing with conflict. He says the conditions put on this invitation were that they all agreed to move forward together in true fellowship and unity, which he thinks had been lacking for some years (Peele, personal communication, 2001). Stuart states that following one of U'Ren's annual letters, between 1987 and 1989, he arranged to meet with Smith and Athol Gill of the House of the Gentle Bunyip. This was a positive meeting, but did not result in lasting reconciliation.

For a while in the mid 1980s the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr David Penman, who told me in 1984 that he was a great admirer of John Smith's abilities, was consulted as a possible arbitrator between the two parties. John U'Ren initiated this move, with Smith's approval.

The Archbishop offered to set up an investigation to help us be reconciled and we were thrilled about that. We would have been very happy to take it. In fact, my statement was that I wanted all our lives to be put under the searchlight and for an independent group to make the decision. If that meant that I was thrown out on my head then so be it, but at least it would be under some proper examination by godly people and not some kind of anarchistic oligarchy (Smith, interview, 2000b).

When Morris Stuart heard about the Archbishop's offer he went with another TLC elder, Gil Cann, to Dr Penman.

We asked David to use his good offices to mediate. By then we were getting spurious letters from John's solicitors threatening legal action. David agreed to do what he could, and accepted our invitation to preach at TLC, but later wrote saying he must withdraw (Stuart, personal communication, 2001).

U'Ren is suspicious about Stuart's actions:

It was fairly sinister what they did. I rang Morris [Stuart] and told him that David Penman had offered his services. Morris then went to see David Penman, who then withdrew his services. He said "Look, I don't want to take sides here" and "It would take too much of my time" and pulled out (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

Indeed, at 47 years of age Penman had only recently become Archbishop and had an agenda for massive reform of the ailing Anglican Church, a stressful task which exacerbated the heart condition from which he died five years later. He would probably not have had time to sort out this complex situation. Possibly he began to feel a conflict of interest at having accepted TLC's invitation to visit, once he realised how this might affect his budding friendship with Smith, who at that time was considering the possibility of joining the Anglican denomination. Penman remained a friend and supporter of John Smith, and was one of the few to support him at the 1989 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation in Manila, when Smith made his controversial stand in supporting the poor on the island of Mindanao.

U'Ren believes it was by now a case of Peele and Stuart having made up their minds that they didn't want Smith back in the fold, and being determined to make the resignation stand. The sense of frustration U'Ren himself felt with Smith was obvious when he said:

They'd had enough of this bloke, and I'd have to say to you that many many times I've asked myself why do I want to be associated with John Smith because this gifted guy with an outstanding ministerial record has these defects and difficulties in his own personality and his own relationships (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

Continuing ramifications

U'Ren also believes that Glenna Smith's propensity to speak out on John's behalf contributed to the TLC leadership group's tensions and disillusionment with John. "Glenna is totally loyal to John, and a very passionate person. But she expresses her opinions unwisely. Her inability to choose to be wise and keep quiet is considerable" (U'Ren, interview, 2000). In his letter to the elders upon resignation

John had written: "the weakness of my family has received a measure of negative attention not afforded other wives of leaders" (Smith, letter, 11-11-82). For Glenna the grief resulting from the split was enormous, and remains an emotional wound to this day. Her life had been immersed in TLC for a decade. The new building, so widely admired, was largely her vision, according to Smith. "She had dreamed it into existence. To lose it almost cost her emotional survival. I remember ... hearing her at 3 a.m. walking around the house in tears, not able to understand what she saw as the injustice of it all" (Smith, 1987: 238-9). In addition, the Smith children were wounded by the split. Suddenly the church family with which they had grown up was alienated from them. U'Ren, who counselled the family over the years, says all three bear anger and lifelong emotional scars, partly as a result of the events of 1982-4. Paul struggled with serious drug abuse in the late 1980s during a rebellious period from which he has since emerged to essentially re-embrace his parents' values. Smith became aware of the tension involved in being a prophetic figure whose personal shortcomings were only too clear to his children (Smith, 1987:237). Of the pain of the split for his children he wrote:

The uncertainty of their dad's position and the pain for this period, whilst driving us much closer than ever before, has also begun to produce an antipathy for the church and its ways which is a sad and to be avoided-at-all-costs situation (Smith, letter, 11-11-82).

Smith himself suffered as a result of the split, writing of it five years later:

Leaving TLC broke me up. I left with a sense of bereavement which is still with me. But I'm most sorry for the members of the congregation, many of whom felt hurt and betrayed by this family break-up. It was a tragedy, and I can't disguise the fact (Smith, 1987: 239).

By 2000 the emotional wounds had healed to some extent, but Smith was still grieving over 'what might have been' in terms of TLC's potential and resources. Eddie Pye sums up the views of many of Smith's longtime friends and supporters when he states: "John should never have walked away from TLC" (Pye, interview, 2001). U'Ren, for his part, still hopes for a reconciliation between John Smith and TLC, saying there are still multiple connections between TLC and John's new organisation, Care and Community Concern (CCC will be examined in Chapter 8). He tells both Smith and the TLC leaders regularly that they can never speak with prophetic authority for reconciliation in Australia unless they first do all they can to heal the breach. He believes:

As an act of servanthood, it would be wonderful if John would walk in to TLC and say 'I'm sorry'. Then he would be able to play a part in the

aboriginal reconciliation debate. Unfortunately, he can never stand up and challenge the Prime Minister to say sorry. There are still people disillusioned with Christianity over the break-up, and the radical Christian movement in Australia is too small for this one not to be patched up. But John sits there in his self-righteousness and says 'Why should I? I've not done anything wrong', and Mike and Morris do the same (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

Smith defends himself by pointing to the long unanswered correspondence with TLC, and TLC's ignoring correspondence from the CCC board in later years seeking settlement and reconciliation.

The continuing TLC leadership holds to a longstanding policy of not wanting to re-enter debate on the whole painful business. In a conversation Mike Peele told me that he had disclosed more about it to me than to anyone outside the split in the years since it took place. He agrees that the whole episode was a sad and confusing one, with some terrible things said and many people being hurt and disillusioned. He is pleased that many of those who left with Smith have returned over the years and been reconciled with those who stayed. The door is still open for Smith to come and talk about reconciliation, he insists, just as it always was. Peele believes that in the years since the split TLC has heeded its leadership's call not to be critical of John Smith, and has remained focused on loving one another and seeking unity in their fellowship. He believes TLC has achieved a truly corporate leadership, and proved that it is not necessary to have one person calling the shots and setting direction. Peele (whom Smith regards as having considerable charisma) says he is wary now of charismatic leaders, having had to deal with them repeatedly in the course of his long ministry. He believes they are "commonly I-me-my focused" and wonders at their motivations. He acknowledges that they are persuasive and powerful in evangelism, but states he has found them, generally speaking, to be compromised in their relationships with others. He believes they are sometimes like 'megastars' who treat others rudely, selfishly and ruthlessly. He asserts that people should not have to accept such behaviour, especially from Christian leaders. Peele believes humanity is tragically inclined to put other human beings on a pedestal and then seek glory by association with them. For his own part, he stresses that he encourages his flock to always put Christ before any human being in their discipleship, and to "own their own walk of faith" by listening, hearing and walking together rather than submitting to the demands of individuals with their own agenda (Peele, personal communication, 2001).

Under the stable leadership of Peele, Stuart and others, TLC in the last 20 years has gone on to become a large and successfully established local church. It has strong

emphases on social action and the arts, and sponsors many creative community outreach projects. Smith admires the way TLC has regrown and consolidated its position, but believes it lacks some of the radical and pioneering edge that his leadership brought to it and has less involvement with 'dangerous' groups such as addicts, outlaw bikers and street people. Smith claims that Montrose House, for example, is not currently used for ministering to such groups, as he believes it would have been under his leadership:

It was one of the first residential places for rehabilitation of ... marginalised and homeless people, almost all of [whom] went on with their faith and their lives were transformed, they got jobs and healthy domestic situations. When TLC split, they just turned that place into a nice retreat for normal believers, so there's nothing happens there now (Smith, interview, 1998a).

The name "Truth and Liberation Concern" remained legally Smith's until the late 1990s, but he was reluctant to take legal means to enforce relinquishment of the name, just as he was reluctant to go to court to seek a fairer property settlement.¹³ "Legally, we could have locked the doors and ejected the leadership many years ago, according to McCracken and McCracken, but we feared the damage to the evangelical witness of our city" (Smith, interview, 2000a).

Reflecting on the split with TLC today, Smith believes the world context played a role in what happened. The Jonestown mass suicide of 913 people in Guyana in 1978 led indisputably to a renewed worldwide scepticism about idealistic communal projects. U.S. communal and utopian projects came under increasing scrutiny from the U.S. government and some, such as the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer Community in Houston, which Smith had visited in 1973, dated the disintegration of their community spirit from that time. Smith believes Jonestown also led to a widespread questioning in Western culture of strong charismatic religious figures with radical and demanding visions and large followings. It could be that some of the resistance to Smith within TLC was fuelled by this general climate in 1981-2. Smith claims the Rev. Ted Noffs of Sydney's Wayside Chapel named himself [Smith] and God's Squad in a Sydney daily newspaper as likely mass suicide contenders in the Australian context, which did not help matters. "I complained to the Uniting Church in Sydney and asked them to hold Noffs accountable for such an irresponsible and defamatory statement but they said that [Noffs] had become a law unto himself and they couldn't do anything about it" (Smith, interview, 2000a). Irresponsible and insulting to Smith as Noffs' action seems to have been, it at least underlines the extent to which Smith was publicly perceived as strongly charismatic

¹³ TLC kept the plant.

in the late 1970s. Noffs seems to have believed that Smith was actually powerful enough to lead his followers into mass suicide!

CHAPTER 8

Routinising the vision through the establishment of Care and Communication Concern

At the start of 1983, when John Smith appeared in public for the first time after quitting TLC, it was with a new 'image' which seemed to speak of leaving the past behind. Gone were the long hair and full beard. In their place was the enormous Henry Lawson-style moustache for which he is now well known. While bringing about a change in appearance, the moustache still symbolised the aggressive masculinity or 'machismo' necessary for impact in the outlaw biker scene. Smith relates wryly how his detractors forecast that without his bushy black beard his prophetic status would quickly vanish (Smith, interview, 1998b), whereas if anything that status grew in the 1980s with his increased media profile.

It was noted in Chapter 1 that transformational leaders learn from their mistakes. If he was not yet aware of the term 'routinisation', Smith intuitively understood that in establishing TLC he had not taken seriously enough the need for clear operating guidelines, structures of accountability, administrative organisation and provision for recourse to appeal. In his next venture he determined to give more attention to such things. To some extent he succeeded.

Smith's letters at the time of the split with TLC indicate that he wished, upon leaving, to develop a clear and unambiguous support base for his outreach to the "Gentiles", in the face of TLC's apparent change of direction. The majority of God's Squad Motor Cycle Club went with Smith from TLC although approximately a third of members, including vice-president Howard Ham, stayed. Smith claims that a majority of non-biker TLC members also left with him. Stuart asserts that less than 100 of 450 TLC members left with Smith, including bikers. Despite disagreement about the actual numbers, it appears that Smith maintained strong support. Chambers recalls:

A healthy proportion of the non-bikers in TLC went with John. Not all went for the sake of the vision. Some liked the alternative church concept, others liked the security of being with John. John was the founder of TLC. Mike [Peele] hasn't got one tenth of John's ability to see the bigger picture. He hasn't [done] the reading, the research, the same understanding. John has an amazingly broad knowledge ... which he can draw upon at any time. He is able to bring a perspective to the big issues (Chambers, interview, 2001).

After a year or so of meeting in hired halls Smith and his followers found a disused and rundown Anglican building to rent in inner city Melbourne, where they became St Martin's Community Church. The wider work came under the umbrella of a new organisation, Care and Communication Concern (CCC), which Smith established with a more regularly instituted board, to which he was answerable as director. Under the terms of the CCC constitution Smith has the right to veto the nomination of any board member. This right of veto, which Smith stresses he did not seek and about which he remains ambivalent, reflected an attempt to balance democratic nomination rights. He states that the right of veto was borrowed from Methodism (Smith, interview, 2001). Smith's veto is balanced by a veto held by the diaconate which employs staff (including Smith until 1999) over a range of other aspects of CCC's operations. CCC is registered as John Smith and Associates--Care and Communication Concern Inc. Legally CCC comprises two separate bodies. John Smith and Associates manages Smith's ministry and schools seminars, and CCC-Welfare Services administers mostly Government-funded initiatives. Until a full-time pastor for St Martin's was employed in the early 1990s Smith was contracted to be at St Martin's 26 Sundays each year.

Under the CCC banner Smith either individually or with God's Squad continued to visit universities and prisons, make regular media appearances and lead interdenominational evangelistic missions. The major thrust in the 1980s, however, was the development of Values for Life seminars in secondary schools, starting in South Australia during Smith's 1982 visit but spreading gradually throughout Australia. The seminars had their genesis many years earlier, in Bill Dunlap's visit to John's Gippsland school perhaps, and in his secondary teaching career when he felt concerned for young people in the confusion of values they felt in rapidly secularising Australia. God's Squad had long been accepting invitations to speak at schools, both church and state. In Adelaide in 1982 Smith took advantage of the South Australian law by which Christian speakers had entry to state schools as long as they had the support of all denominations, and as long as they did not proselytise (see Chapter 5). A sympathetic young business entrepreneur, Paul Wightman, was able to organise the necessary denominational support so that in all but one of Adelaide's suburbs, Thebarton, Smith and his team had access to the secondary schools. Unable to evangelise directly, they sought instead to educate children about Christian values, to demonstrate that Christianity was to be taken seriously as one of a range of options. They aimed to stimulate young people to think about the meaning and purpose of their lives, and to develop a sense of self-worth. The seminars were well organised and soon had the co-operation of education authorities. They included musicians and artists such as comedian Glyn Nicholas.

Many young performers in Adelaide identified with Smith's approach and were keen to take part in the seminars, gaining valuable exposure at the start of their careers. The Values for Life seminar model was later used in other states and territories. By the mid 1990s, Care and Communication Concern claimed to have run seminars in some 5000 secondary schools. Smith himself took part in more than 3000 seminars (Smith, interview, 2001). More than 500,000 students took part in the seminars, which continue as funding permits. In the 2000-1 financial year seminars were run in 80 secondary and 92 primary schools.

John Smith's addresses in schools and outreach missions spanned a wide range of values-related subjects, but a perennially requested topic for discussion was sexuality. Smith felt a special compassion for the young 'casualties', male and female, of what he considers the confusing values of the sexual revolution. He tries to dissuade young people from promiscuity, but also to deliver them from self-condemnation where they have been promiscuous or suffered sexual abuse. Occasionally he alarmed church audiences with graphic references to masturbation or sexual intercourse. I was present one evening when Smith deeply shocked a conservative suburban church congregation by opining that it was at the moments when young people felt most cut off from God, such as when they were feeling guilt and despair about having masturbated over pictures in a magazine - yet again - that God in his grace drew closest to their lonely hearts. This being contrary to the usual evangelical attitude to such activity at that time, one could have heard a pin drop among the motionless audience. Afterwards many in the congregation, adults as well as adolescents, seemed impressed and vaguely absolved. One year at the Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival in the U.K. he told a story which indicated that this compassion might have grown out of his own experience.

When I was a kid my grandma gave me a book. It had a picture of a big, hunky-looking fantastic guy..., and it simply had written across the top of the page: "He doesn't!". On the other page was a skinny, emaciated, drop-jawed, pigeon-chested freak, standing there with his tongue lolling out of his mouth, looking in the last stages of self-destruction, and it simply had over the top: "He does!". And every time I did, in the privacy of my bedroom, I'd kind of take a glance in the mirror. You know what I'm talking about. Masturbation! ... You know what that did to me? It made me so guilty that I did it more... God will not let us live with a sense of total self-sufficiency. That's why we're driven to sexual promiscuity. We will feel inadequate without something. But the something this generation needs is the intimacy and tenderness of Almighty God himself, and herself, for God according to Isaiah is like a mother that nurses her child nestling at the breast" (Smith, address, 1988).

Smith's view, influenced by Viktor Frankl and strongly promoted in CCC's Values for Life seminars, is that a lack of real meaning and purpose in living causes heightened libido and a craving for power through materialism. He believes Jesus recognised, radically for his time, that sexual promiscuity was not so much a cause, but a consequence, of spiritual disease. The first step to helping people caught up in promiscuity or sexual obsession is not to condemn them but to help them deal with their alienation and lack of a sense of identity. Smith sometimes weeps as he speaks of young people caught up in a pattern of casual sexual activity. He says he remembers from his own period of closet atheism, nearly forty years ago, the sense of emptiness and despair which he experienced following illicit sex.

International dimensions

As the 1980s progressed Smith's reputation grew to international proportions. He became a regular speaker at the annual Greenbelt Festivals in the United Kingdom. These were week-long outdoor festivals with a line-up of Christian performers and speakers, aimed mainly at young people. By the early 1990s Smith employed a personal manager, Steve Drury, to organise his speaking engagements and media appearances. He was by this stage functioning as a professional speaker and writer, with books being published nationally and in some cases internationally. In February, 1990, Smith addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York on the subject of the Jubilee Campaign for the remission of debt of developing nations. This opportunity came about through a former TLC member working in the UN, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church which has a seat in the assembly as a Non Government Organisation.

With his growing status Smith remained compassionate and concerned for street people, as I can testify through having witnessed an oddly incongruous episode in 1990. While Smith was helping an alcoholic man who was in a state of delirium tremens on the streets of Darwin late one night in 1990, his mobile telephone rang. At this stage 'mobiles' were still very new, expensive, and bulky. He said to the amazed alcoholic, who had never seen a 'mobile' in use: "Excuse me, mate, I just need to talk to my manager in Sydney". Having sorted out details of a media appearance, Smith returned his attention unfazed to the alcoholic, who was wondering if this event was real or hallucinatory. "You might have heard my spots on the radio," commented Smith to the man, who as a 'long grass' dweller never listened to the radio. "Let me tell you about Jesus, who has a special love for people who are suffering a bit or feeling rejected," he said. The patient, whom I knew had been rejected from birth, seemed bewildered but appreciative as we helped him to shelter for the night. I felt Smith's regard for me increase as he realised that I knew

such street people, for this is something he respects in colleagues. The discordant mix of the two worlds - high-tech and street - seemed quite normal to Smith. To some of his former associates in the Jesus Movement he appeared by this stage to have grown somewhat remote in his high-flying media role, yet his heartfelt concern for people on the fringes was always real and demanding of an active response. If trouble developed on the streets he would unhesitatingly wade in to intercede, sometimes showing great physical courage. This boldness and readiness to act endeared him to many who may have had reservations about his lack of subtlety in approach, or his at times irksome sense of his own importance. I believe this kind of combination of qualities is typical of the charismatic leader, inspiring admiration, a little awe, but also a sense of this being the kind of person with whom it would be difficult for a follower to develop a satisfactory mutual relationship. He/she is somehow larger than life, and one tends to feel somewhat eclipsed in relationship with him/her. I have felt this way to some extent with John Smith.

In the 1990s Care and Communication Concern, under Smith's overall leadership, broadened its social welfare services. *Hand Brake Turn*, developed by Smith's son-in-law Keith Waters, is a programme for young people who have either been involved or at risk of being involved in crime. It teaches mechanical skills and where possible provides connections with employers. At the time of writing, it is operating in Melbourne, Sydney and Geelong, and is proposed for adaptation in Tasmania and the United Kingdom. CCC's current Annual Report states that in the 2000-1 financial year 251 attended its programmes, with 110 finding employment upon completion. It is funded by Federal and State Government grants, corporate donations and fund-raising activities. *Inside Out* is a young offenders' programme, working with young people aged 15 to 17 in the juvenile justice system, and supporting them after release from custody. In 2000-1 the programme, which currently runs in Victoria and Tasmania and is proposed for New South Wales, worked with 100 young men and provided supported accommodation for 37 with the help of CCC's *Adolescent Community Placement* program. These programs are largely State Government-funded. *Getting On* is a drug education and support service; *Lightpath* provides respite services; and the *Steps Outreach Service* works with homeless 'street kids' who gather at the Flinders Street railway station steps in central Melbourne, and is funded by public donations and an annual ball. *Handbrake Turn* and *Inside Out* in particular have been commended by the Federal Government. Smith claims that a drop in car theft in the Dandenong district of Melbourne of 25 per cent in 1997 was attributed by police to these two programmes operating in the area. Of those who retrained through *Handbrake Turn* that year, 85.7 per cent found employment. Of those participating in *Inside Out* only 15 per cent re-offended (Smith, interview, 1998a). Smith explains that the programmes were chosen according to need, rather than according

to available Government funding. "What we've said is: what is the service delivery need, for those that are most in need? Having determined that, as something we're not willing to move away from, is there any way we can get some (funding) for it?" (Smith, interview, 1998a)

Smith believes this *modus operandi* is consistent with the way the Jesus Movement always worked, and that the contemporary expression of the movement has something to teach the institutional church about working in partnership with government. The church, he says, tends to trust in public relations strategies in order to influence government. Rather, "redeeming the streets always gets attention; if you can succeed where the politicians haven't been able to, then you have their ear" (Smith, interview, 1998). Often offers of help with funding will follow. Compassionate welfare ministries are central to Smith's transformational vision:

'Care' is from the old Gothic word *cara*, meaning to lament or sorrow with, so that to truly minister to a country you've got to stand with the Jesus of whom it was said 'Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows'. It has been an incarnational entering into the pain and struggle. That's why many of us (in the movement) got into ministries that, still today, are flourishing in terms of advocacy and cultural brokerage between contentious forces, for instance between government delivery services and people in the street (Smith, interview, 1998a).

Smith continues to be critical of pragmatic expressions of expressing the Christian gospel which he believes "pare down the message so as not to call for transformation in our own lives" (Smith, address, 1997a) and which do not seek for God's will to be done 'on earth as it is in heaven'. "[We seek] a radical transformation of the human heart so that once again the world will say 'How those Christians love each other, the world and their enemies', [and to be] people who are an instrumental part of a transformed world," he says (Smith, address, 1997a). He is fond of quoting the aphorism that the church does not need a message that is relevant to the world, so much as it needs Christians who are relevant to the world. "Are we relevant to the transforming Gospel?" he asked delegates at a denominational church conference in 1997. He referred them to the New Testament apostles as people "who preached that the gospel would transform our lives to make them moral in the midst of a world that was far more immoral than the world we are in at present" (Smith, address, 1997a).

Study in the United States

In 1996 Smith went to the United States to study at Asbury Seminary, Kentucky, for a Doctor of Missiology degree, combining social science, mission history, theology and movemental theory. For many years he felt his lack of formal intellectual qualifications to be both an advantage and, increasingly, a disadvantage in his transformational leadership.

Charismatic leaders do not need formal qualifications, and in fact can be perceived as less bound by traditional restraints without them. There can be no doubt that Smith's remarkable intellectual energy was fired to some extent by a sense that, with only diplomas to his name, he needed to develop his mind and knowledge if he was to communicate effectively with an intelligentsia which he believed was often neglected by the mainline church. However scathing he may have been about university qualifications as a young charismatic rebel-rouser, by the mid-1990s he came to believe that to contribute effectively at influential levels of public debate and policy-making "you need a doctorate before anyone will take you seriously" (Smith, interview, 2000b). Chambers considers that Smith believes intuitively that there is "another wave of cultural change" approaching, and that he wants to be fully equipped to ride it when it comes. "He's not remotely interested in being Dr Smith, but in being prepared for what is next" (Chambers, interview, 2001). Smith also believes he has a great amount of knowledge and insight into the Jesus Movement of the 1970s, which in his view has not been adequately documented, analysed or assessed for posterity (Smith, interview 2000). Whether or not Smith was attracted by the notion of being "Dr Smith", he took the opportunity when it came to research and reflect formally on the factors behind his own success and that of the Jesus Movement as a whole. His tuition costs were to be funded by part-scholarship, and CCC offered to pay his and Glena's living costs for two years.

Clearly it was optimistic to believe he could complete a doctoral programme in two years, and the Smiths' prolonged stay in the U.S. until 2001 put CCC and St Martin's Community Church under some strain. Smith applied for a 'green card' to enable him to work and support himself in America, but to no avail. CCC ended up funding them for four years before withdrawing support. The fact was, Smith's prolonged absence was contributing in part to grave financial problems for CCC, partly because of the cost of support against a falling Australian dollar but also because his high profile and charismatic presence was no longer visible or active in attracting gifts and donations from the Australian public (U'Ren, interview, 2000). As Chambers put it: "With John in the country, in the media and attracting attention, the result is that there is a donations base. He's on TV with Bert Newton, or Ray Martin, and in the papers, and people like his spin on things. It's controversial, but they respond to it" (Chambers, interview 2001). With Smith away, however, the donations were dropping off and the idealistic motivation of some of the staff was diminishing. Chambers recalls: "We did find that after [our charismatic leader] had gone people did rise to fill their roles. Some people however lost their enthusiasm for the prophetic edge. It showed they didn't have the vision" (Chambers, interview, 2001). By the end of 1999 distress at home at Smith's absence grew to the point where staff were being laid off or resigning in anger and frustration at the absence of their inspirational leader. Smith's son in law, Keith Waters, himself a

strong, creative and capable leader, and the driving force behind much of CCC's latter-day success, eventually resigned as Smith's deputy and accepted a job in welfare with the Salvation Army. Smith admits to a serious breach in their relationship which had to be addressed upon his return in 2001 (Smith, interview, 2001). This kind of tense situation is exactly what could be expected when an organisation routinised out of charismatic origins finds itself struggling without its founder's charismatic presence and high-profile drawing power with the public. Without John Smith CCC becomes simply another 'grass roots' church welfare organisation doing admirable and pioneering work but attracting little public support. His charismatic presence holds the organisation in the public eye and attracts a flow of financial gifts, and his transformational vision assists in keeping the organisation's thinking radical and idealistic, both important aspects for maintaining public support. More than anything, his prolonged absence left his followers feeling bereft, let down and angry. As U'Ren told fellow CCC board members: "We all want John back, but in a re-packaged form!" (U'Ren, interview, 2000).

Conger and Kanungo list as one of the negative traits of charismatic leadership the tendency to ambition in charismatics' drive to achieve their vision, accompanied by a miscalculation of the necessary resources (for example financial or human), leading to crises. The leader, wishing to expand or accelerate the realisation of his/her vision, launches out and is encouraged by initial successes, but may be deluded about the resources necessary to complete the project (Conger and Kanungo, 1998: 223).

From Smith's perspective, he remained in America through determination to finish the doctoral work that he believed God had called him to begin, and to which he became passionately committed both as a means of further implementing his vision and mission, and of documenting the Movement he loved. However adapting to academic life and the discipline of academic writing took considerable time for a man used to operating out of intuitive inspiration and raw energy. The first draft of his doctoral thesis amounted to more than half a million words, about four times what was required. Much of it was considered to be too self-referential. Adding to his already busy life, Smith started a church for the poor in a run-down area of Lexington, the city nearest to Wilmore. He mentored a small group of interested Asbury students in this outreach project. This is significant in that it shows that Smith continues to reach out to 'battlers' and to mentor willing followers, even when he is under great pressure and in a foreign culture. It is a vocation that he simply must follow. Wherever he goes his instinct is to gather a group around him to begin to implement his vision, as only a charismatic leader can do with such facility. He began to spend Friday evenings 'caring and sharing' the gospel in bars in downtown Lexington, seeking to make contact with the kind of people he did not find in church or the seminary: Vietnam veterans, rebels and ordinary people. When Smith

sought support from the Christian Missionary Alliance for his new congregation, he was presented with a Harley Davidson motorcycle to use in his mission. Smith refused to join the conservative Christian Missionary Alliance, partly because he wanted to remain a free agent and partly because he would have had to become teetotal as part of the arrangement. This meant that the organisation did not pay the rent for the house which was his new church, which in turn meant John had to accept preaching engagements far and wide to raise money to pay the church's running costs, reducing again his time and energy for academic work. Smith and Glena were welcomed into a local Harley Owners Group (HOG) chapter, a totally secular society where Glena found people "friendlier than in any church" (Glena Smith, interview, 1998).

The Smiths seemed more at home in their downtown church than in the seminary community. Though staff welcomed them and included them in community life, they did not always find acceptance among the students: their 'alternative' dress and John's long hair exemplified a difference in personal style and thinking which made them somewhat suspect among the clean-cut, highly competitive younger students. Glena took motorcycle riding lessons for the first time, so much did she enjoy the company of the friendly HOG group. She rejoiced in having her husband with her more than he ever had been, and feels more at home in the U.S. than in Melbourne. Her attitude may have something to do with the negative response in Melbourne to their delayed return. "If we'd been elderly missionaries returning from serving the poor in Africa we'd be heroes to our supporters. But having been serving the poor in America we come back to slander and negativity," she claims (Glena Smith, personal communication, 2001).

In 2000, while in the U.S., Smith underwent radical surgery for prostate cancer, which further slowed the completion of his doctoral thesis. Smith found that being diagnosed with and treated for cancer affected the balance of his perspective. "Those of us that have had cancer know a feeling one can barely express," he wrote. "You suddenly feel like your whole body's immune system has let you down. You begin to doubt everything about yourself" (Smith, magazine article, 2001). He returned to Australia permanently in 2001 to complete the doctoral thesis, and immediately set about dealing with the problems that had arisen in CCC. He did considerable 'fence-mending' with bruised and hurt members of what remained of his movement. Significant financial restructuring followed, so that by November 2001 the organisation was out of debt. During the stabilisation process, which coincided with his recovery from the cancer surgery, Smith worked in an honorary capacity while existing on Government welfare. For its part CCC determined to be more open and accountable for its actions and spending in future. Smith is optimistic that the future is now bright for CCC (personal communication, 2001), and looks forward to resuming his own ministry. Somewhat disillusioned with the right-

wing nature of American Christianity, as he sees it, Smith is relieved to be back in Australia and concentrating for the time being on God's Squad and CCC activities here.

Smith's followers, however, worry about him. Bruce Chambers admits: "I've always worried about his weight, his diet, his lack of exercise. He should get more sleep. He keeps going on his high energy levels. The vision keeps him burning. His passion for it makes him a dynamic and fascinating person". Chambers believes Smith will "die in harness. It'll suddenly change and we'll have to decide whether to go on or not. If it stopped being what it is, I don't know that I would keep going in the movement" (Chambers, interview, 2001).

Smith's colleague and former CCC board member John U'Ren believes it is questionable in the meantime whether Smith will regain his former status in Australia as a Christian leader and spokesman (U'Ren, interview, 2000). It remains to be seen whether or not U'Ren is right. However evangelism of the unchurched, which the mainline church denominations find such a difficult struggle, comes to Smith so naturally that it is likely he will once again gather around himself, as he did in Lexington, a group of outsiders subject to his charismatic and transformational appeal, ready to respond to his rhetoric and to work under his leadership in outreach to the marginalised, poor and needy.

Good or bad charisma?

It is worth asking, in concluding this examination of Smith's charismatic leadership in various contexts, whether his charisma has in the final analysis been 'good' or 'bad'. Various approaches are put forward for assessing charismatic leadership. One can ask whether or not the followers benefited from the leadership. This naturally involves value judgments, for the answer depends whether Smith's type of Christian discipleship is considered a good or a bad thing for people. What can be said is that many people benefited through Smith's ministry. Certainly, many needy people benefited in purely practical ways from Smith's compassion and generosity, quite apart from any subjective spiritual considerations. Moreover, nobody has publicly complained about him or his conduct, nor has he ever been involved in scandal. Musser asks whether the leader emphasised devotion to ideals or devotion to him/herself as leader (in Yukl, 1989: 227). Smith emphasised devotion to ideals. Although he wanted to be liked by those he respected, and as has been seen had some of the classic narcissistic traits, one has the impression that his primary focus was not seeking personal devotion. Many people were devoted to him, and he relied on their support, but he did not appear outwardly to canvas or solicit adoration so much as support for his idealistic vision. McClelland proposes the criterion of whether the leader weakened his people by encouraging dependence on him, or strengthened them through emphasising the organisation and its ideals (in Yukl, 1989:

227f). Did Smith encourage dependence on himself? It is evident that within God's Squad he was not inclined to delegate power freely, which perhaps amounts to a passive encouragement of dependence on himself. Eddie Pye's observation, however, was that Smith did what he had to do to lead a motorcycle club in the 'outlaw' subculture, and that this required a very 'macho', dominant style (Pye, interview, 2001). He did court publicity, write books and cultivate the media, but principally to draw people's attention to Christ and Christian ethics and values, though he may well have enjoyed the public attention which this brought.

While on the whole there was a redeemed character to Smith's leadership, his fellow leaders at Truth and Liberation, and some of his God's Squad subordinates, saw him as not just dominant, but increasingly domineering and autocratic. Like most charismatic people Smith can dominate a gathering or a conversation, and he can argue belligerently for his point of view. He can be blunt and abrupt with people in dispute. He is not physically vain, or even apparently self-conscious at all, giving the impression often of a certain unstudied scruffiness. His wife considers him "the most truly humble man" (Glena Smith, personal communication, 2001). However one can perceive through his letters and at times in his conversation an awareness that he considers himself an apostolic figure, with a responsibility to speak prophetically in even the highest of forums on behalf of marginalised and downtrodden people. How this is assessed depends on value judgements. If he does indeed have an apostolic vocation, then he may well have such a responsibility. The danger with this kind of conviction, which to the secular mind may seem pretentious or even alarming, is that in the subjective importance and urgency of it all the charismatic leader sometimes neglects the needs of others in his/her organisation for affirmation and consideration. This Smith seems to have done at times. On the other hand, since his motivation was always characterised by idealism and a longing for justice, he can hardly be judged as primarily narcissistic. The success and relative stability of God's Squad over the years as a mentoring institution would indicate that he encouraged others to achieve and perform, and that their needs for higher values and a sense of purpose were met.

It is easy today with all our modern resources to put a charismatic leader under the microscope and accuse him/her of narcissism. I suspect that if, say, Francis of Assisi, Wesley, or even St Paul had been subjected to such analytical scrutiny in their time they may have revealed a few negative charismatic indications. Francis, for example, became an embarrassment to his order through his carping about the need to return to the purity of his original vision. Wesley's wife left him after a short period of experiencing the exigencies of his driven and itinerant lifestyle. Such figures are remembered as positive,

however, because of the overwhelmingly transformational nature of their vision and achievements. On an appropriately lesser scale, so ought Smith to be judged.

To what extent were Smith's inner conflicts reflected in his followers? It is noted that his mother's perfectionism and his father's emphasis on guilt and the need for repentance resulted in conflicts within Smith from an early age. This brought about, rightly or wrongly, a heightened sense of personal morality, which Smith later broadened to include public morality, and a tendency to get very, even explosively, angry in the presence of what he perceived as wrongdoing. Audiences at Truth and Liberation may have suffered as a result of his angry tirades in sermons against individuals and the establishment, but if people did not like his forceful style of preaching, they were always free to leave. Another conflict is evident in the enigma of the soft-hearted, emotional and compassionate Smith reaching out to the world in the protective guise of a tough, aggressively masculine worldly biker. Smith attracted people who identified with him in such a pattern, but it is questionable whether he increased this conflict in them. More likely he served as a vicarious means of resolving their conflict to some extent. The conflict and lack of structures in his personal and family life, and the undisciplined use of time mentioned by U'Ren, were not exemplary, but they reflected in part the 1970s alternative ideology. To an extent the whole Jesus Movement subculture suffered from these traits, and chose Smith as a leader - as he in turn chose it - partly because he reflected its values. Overall Smith's charisma seems to have been positive rather than negative; altruistic rather than egocentric; and of benefit to the majority of people he led, rather than detrimental.

CONCLUSION

John Smith is to a substantial degree, in Weber's terms, a charismatic leader of prophetic emissary type within the Christian tradition, shunning institutional or denominational accreditation or association. For most of his career he had little in the way of formal professional qualifications, and relied on the power of his gifts of oratory, his self-taught knowledge and the force of his personal presence and reputation for his authority. In the early days of his ascendancy he and his family literally survived on 'love' offerings. For most of his time as a leader in the Jesus Movement he lived on an allowance given to him according to need, which was often less than that given to others in the movement whose expenses were higher. He was never driven by economic incentive in his work: rather, he was driven by a desire to fulfil his vision of leading people into a revitalised and compassionate Christian faith and community. Typically, where that vision was threatened he did what he believed conducive to defending it and furthering its implementation.

As well as being a charismatic leader, Smith is also what Burns calls a transforming or transformational leader. He never offered his followers the promise of material benefits or success, but rather appealed to their sense of a calling to a higher moral vision, idealistic values and compassionate purpose: in his case those originally proposed and exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth. In an often traumatic and isolated childhood, Smith learned from his parents an intense, emotional compassion for a "lost" world which needed "saving". Loneliness and alienation within a 'holiness' upbringing played their part along with subjective spiritual factors in Smith's developing a "fire in the belly", a sense of destiny and of being a 'brand plucked from the burning' to bring the Christian gospel to secularised Australians. For Smith since childhood that gospel has always been understood in terms of moral transformation. Following his 'conversion' from conservative to radical in the late 1960s, Smith entered the new decade of the 1970s with the conviction that the world needed not just saving but "transforming", and he remains true to that conviction.

The liminal experience associated with his 'conversion' not only unleashed powers of creativity in Smith, but also enabled him to bond with subcultures from which he had previously been sheltered: marginal groups such as bikers; and counter-cultural groups. This reaggregation, in Turner's terms, made it possible for him to be drafted as a leader in the Jesus Movement in the early 1970s. The movement gave Smith scope to exercise his gifts as a spokesman and leader, and provided a corporate expression of the kind of Christian vision to which he was personally committed. It gave him a forum in which to develop as a popular orator and activist, with the opportunity to proclaim his vision, and to ride the thrilling crest of a wave of cultural change.

Smith came to prominence in the cultural upheaval of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the post-war baby-boom generation came of age in a fluster of revolutionary scepticism about the status quo. God's Squad was formed in the same year that Gough Whitlam rode to power on the "It's Time" slogan. There was a perceived crisis of confidence in the way Western society had been run since World War II, and the newly arising Jesus Movement signified the searching of a younger generation for an alternative means of expressing Christian faith and 'being church'. Smith, with his evident self-confidence, articulating a powerful vision of a 'new' Christianity, wholistic and relevant, was a natural leader of the movement in eastern Australia. Despite his vision differing markedly from that of the Christian status quo, it was seen as reasonable and within the latitude of evangelical orthodoxy. His personal risk-taking was obvious: dismissed from his job as a professional evangelist for daring to take the gospel to the Sunbury Rock Festival, he was left to support his family on the gifts of sympathetic and admiring friends, and was from that time considered *persona non grata* by the conservative evangelical establishment. The unconventional strategies of God's Squad and 'pub' evangelism not only captured media attention (which in itself is seen as a kind of success) but worked practically as evidenced by the rapid growth of the Truth and Liberation Concern church and its influence as a trend-setter in the vanguard of the Australian church generally. Smith's 'wholistic' gospel, and his assessment that the way to move forward was to remain outside the mainstream denominations, were perceived as an accurate assessment, both in terms of timing and available opportunities. What constraints there were in the situation proved insufficient to make conformity necessary. When the cultural changes of the early 1970s endured, and the shift in Australian society eventually proved lasting, Smith's confidence and faith in leading his people into the new era was attributed to him in charismatic currency by his followers. His intuitive sense of what was happening in society and of a Christian response was vindicated: his strategy, though based on instinct and intuition rather than hard data, was successful for a time.

Smith's career, typically for that of a charismatic leader, was largely guided by his own intuition. This intuition however was conditioned by his devoted study of John Wesley's life and theology, by the evolving Australian spirituality and by the arts, especially Australian writers such as Henry Lawson and Manning Clark. An interest in and study of liberation theology was also influential. Each of these influences stressed compassion for the ordinary people and the marginalised, and sought in different ways to counter any tendency to 'wowseryism' or self-righteousness among the pious. Wesley and the liberation theologians encouraged an active response to the poor, reinforcing Smith's development as a transformational leader. One of Smith's aims in his doctoral studies in the late 1990s was to reflect rigorously on why his early success took place, and on why the strategies and tactics he and the Jesus Movement employed intuitively worked so well in their time (and correspondingly why they are no longer working so well). Smith now

comprehends that he failed to routinise his leadership and the management of Truth and Liberation Concern early enough or effectively enough. Quite simply, he did not understand the importance of such a process. This was one of the greatest failings in his work, because he was unable to harness the energy and resources of the successful Truth and Liberation Concern in the long term to work toward the achievement of his vision. Care and Communication Concern, though better routinised and better led by Smith in terms of organisation, came after the passing of the Jesus Movement's peak and therefore remained a smaller and less resourced vehicle for his talents, though very effective in its schools and employment programmes.

Presidency of God's Squad Motor Cycle Club offered Smith unusual scope to function as a charismatic leader. The tribal, all-male and strongly hierarchical nature of the outlaw biker club, to which God's Squad conformed for the sake of identifying with the subculture, demands that the club president be a kind of warlord in his leadership style. Club presidents have tremendous authority within the club, but they must earn this authority through exhibiting a clear air of command. Heroic bravery is expected from presidents on occasions, and the ranks look to them for a sense of vitality and strength, and for esteem and loyalty. Within the Christian context of God's Squad Smith was judged a fitting person for this presidential role, as he strove to prove himself worthy. The symbiotic relationship of charismatic leader and followers was established and, despite all its vicissitudes, survives after nearly thirty years. Through its moral strength and persistence, God's Squad with Smith as leader gained slow acceptance and respect of the outlaw clubs and leaders in the eastern half of Australia. This is unusual in a context where most 'Christian' motorcycle clubs are scorned by the subculture as a whole. Smith remains as president of God's Squad.

Even within the chauvinistic motor cycle club context Smith managed to inject a strong element of transformational leadership. He did this by treating God's Squad as a vehicle for rigorous training in Christian formation, where the demands and sanctions that could be made on disciples were more in keeping with a strict religious order than a church. Most outlaw club members look to their leaders for an ethical framework of some (usually tribal) kind. Smith made this the context for teaching Christian ethics and for building moral expectation. The result was a positive impact on the lives of a number of members with many going on to work in the helping professions. The success of God's Squad in its transformational aims, as with that of TLC, was limited by negative aspects of Smith's leadership. These included common charismatic flaws such as poor interpersonal relationships and administrative practices, and an inability to delegate authority for full effectiveness. Although he learned much from his early mistakes, to some extent Smith carried these flaws into the CCC period.

The outlaw biker aspect of Smith's work led to a media profile in Australia and eventually, to a lesser extent, in the U.K. Publicity and performance resulted in a modicum of fame, which in turn reinforced his charisma and added to the number of people influenced. Smith was able, particularly through broadcasting and paperback books, to project his transforming appeal and vision to a much wider public than just his immediate followers. When celebrities expressed enthusiasm for his cause, his charismatic power was again reinforced by association.

Smith experienced a tension during his career between the charismatic leader (Weber's prophet) and the religious functionary (Weber's priest) which co-exist in his make-up. With the success of Truth and Liberation Concern as an alternative local church, his charismatic intuition was to establish what might have become a dynamic new network of churches, with a theology that was both 'wholistic' and truly Australian in its perspective. However Smith's early conditioning as a 'son of the manse' led him to try and direct converts from his movement into established denominational parishes. At the time he understood this as doing the right thing, i.e. as a moral issue. The instinct of the charismatic entrepreneur was yielding to the idealistic integrity of the transformational leader at this point. Smith was strongly individualistic in many ways, but he subordinated this charismatic quality when moral ideals demanded.

This was seen again at the time of the TLC split. Smith the charismatic visionary wanted above all to protect his vision. In doing so he became, at times, overbearingly critical of church members and others in his public pronouncements. He perceived the threat to be social and religious conservatism, which from Mike Peele's point of view was simply putting pastoral care of members before transforming the outside world. TLC's subsidiary leaders started to resist Smith's charismatic authority. Smith believes, correctly in my view, that the popular support of the TLC rank and file would have sided with him if he had fought Peele and Stuart for control of the organisation. He felt this intuitively, but his theological beliefs, influenced by Bonhoeffer and others, led him to withdraw and surrender TLC with all its resources to the subsidiary leaders. His understanding of Jesus' words such as: "Do not resist an evil person ... If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well" (Matt 5: 39-40, NIV Bible) encouraged a passivity (or at least a pacifism) in the circumstances which was unusual for a charismatic leader. Since Jesus' ethic was Smith's moral standard, the transformational leader in him put obedience to Christ before a normal charismatic response. Even so, his resignation was a typically impulsive response, and by the time he reconsidered and tried to negotiate a settlement with TLC, it was too late. Smith, due to inexperience and ignorance, failed to effectively 'routinise' the leadership of TLC, in

Weber's terms. In his defence, it could be said that he was untrained in leadership dynamics, and had to learn progressively.

It was not until he took a number of years' leave from Care and Communication Concern for doctoral studies in the U.S. that Smith studied leadership theory and began to understand the crucial nature of routinisation for a charismatic leader. Ironically, in taking this extended break he underestimated the importance of his own charismatic leadership presence for the well-being of his organisation. In typically charismatic fashion he miscalculated the resources necessary for him to obtain the doctoral degree which he believed he needed for the next phase of his work, that of being heard as a credible voice in national debate and discussion. Without his public profile and the inspirational effect of his regular public appearances and oratory for twice the expected time, the financial support for CCC's maintenance and expansion gradually declined. Without his transformational presence continually engaging the Christian public and maintaining CCC's radical reinterpretation of conventional welfare thinking, CCC became in the public eye just another worthy welfare initiative, carrying out creative work but failing to capture the imagination of its potential support base. In some cases idealistic work practices of staff deteriorated in Smith's absence. Several of CCC's projects expanded successfully while he was away, however, with government funding. This bodes well for the organisation's future now that Smith has returned. If effective change is the true test of transformational leadership, it is often found in the successful continuation of an institution founded by a charismatic leader. CCC and God's Squad will be proof of Smith's transformational success, especially if they survive his eventual passing. Indeed, TLC survives and prospers as a tribute to Smith's foundational vision, if not to his leadership.

At Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, Smith was unable to help himself taking time from a pressured doctoral programme to initiate another characteristic charismatic work among the jaded and marginalised people of the nearby city of Lexington. This is evidence that although he now returns to a shrivelled and considerably disgruntled Melbourne support base, Smith will probably—his recovery from cancer permitting—re-emerge in his usual way. If CCC and God's Squad do not continue to prosper, Smith will likely begin again in Australia with a small group of like-minded souls and progress from there. After all, he retains a great depth of understanding of Australian culture and thinking, and now has a better grasp of how leadership and organisations function. At the same time the overseas initiatives may continue to prosper and grow. Smith feels fit and believes he has another twenty years' active ministry in him (Smith, personal communication, 2001).

To what degree has John Smith's leadership style assisted him in fulfilling his vision for a radical alternative Christian community and outreach? It must be said that his charismatic and transformational gifts made it possible for him to accomplish what he otherwise would not have been able to start. One of the reasons Smith is admired by denominational church leaders across Australia is that he has achieved where so often they have failed: in communicating effectively with unchurched Australians and particularly those of the 'baby boom' generation. As Eddie Pye said to John at the start of his ministry, when the baby boomers were still young: "Man, you've really got it with kids...". Smith was able to forgo rational and traditional forms of authority and rely instead on the personal and emotional attraction of his charismatic gifts with young people, and the transformational nature of his vision. This was a tremendous advantage in founding both God's Squad and TLC, and one envied by a host of non-charismatic Christian youth leaders. Smith deployed his gifts to the full throughout the 1970s, resulting in changed and improved lives for many of his followers.

He did not however for most of his career fully understand the way in which his gifts operate or their limitations. The passionate, spontaneous aspect of John Smith's personality, the self-assurance and confidence which were so much part of his authority, went hand in hand with a personal inability or unwillingness to set boundaries in his ministry and family life. Sometimes in his passion for his vocation he overlooked the needs of followers or family members. He shows evidence of trying to confront his own weaknesses at times, but the testimony of some of his followers is that he was not able to do this effectively. Though sensitive and compassionate with needy people, he was not always tactful in dealings with peers or authority figures. He developed a tendency to heavy-handedness in his prophetic preaching, and what John U'Ren has called "a propensity to exacerbate problems by his intensity and drive" (U'Ren, interview 2000). These flaws undoubtedly limited what he attained toward his goal.

Yet many are willing to forgive Smith his flaws because they admired and benefited from his courage and humanity over the years. They sense that he is, at heart, like Jesus of Nazareth in his warmth and compassion toward imperfect people, and his acceptance of their weaknesses. At times he may have been less than pastoral with colleagues, competitors and even followers, but he is generous toward the needy, often brave in their defence, and willing to be counted a friend to the outcast and marginalised.

End word

John Smith may never again attract the crowds of followers he once inspired. It is a different era and the 'baby-boomers' who were his original constituency have mostly drifted into other expressions of church, which have finally adapted to the changes in society brought by the 1960s and 1970s. This generation's enthusiasm for radical

alternative lifestyle tended to dissipate with its journey into middle and older age. There will always be some people irrespective of age-groups, however, who refuse to settle for bourgeois values or conventional expressions of Christianity, and who look beyond the blandishments and convenience offered by the mega-church expression or the security offered by the traditional denominations. There will continue to be a group for whom a wholistic and relatively non-institutional form of Christianity is desirable, with a theology of redemption which seeks communal as well as individualistic expression, and takes into account such things as ecology. There will remain bikers and Vietnam veterans, 'hippies', rebels and rejects, to whom Smith will appeal with his compassionate presentation of the Christian gospel. There will always be an audience of some sort for the gifted old-style charismatic orator. The Australian media in Smith's absence found new younger Christian spokespersons such as Tim Costello, and whether Smith can find a place in the media governed by his children's generation will be interesting to observe. His depth of knowledge and understanding of the Australian context will always make him a valuable resource for both the media and the Australian church, and for this reason a continuing role in Australian public life is more likely than one abroad. Whatever the case, Smith will endure, one suspects, in active service of a relatively informal and maverick kind. Through the rest of his life it is probable that there will always be a group, big or small, of devoted supporters and followers gathered around him, supporting him and inspired by him. Perhaps some will be exasperated by him occasionally. No doubt he will appear from time to time in public forums to ask the difficult questions and point out the things most people would rather not see.

To care for the poor is to constantly rejoice in seeing the power of God change people into friends whom he can enlist for the transformation of society. It's not watching a nice person adding Jesus to his [sic] bag: it's seeing an un-nice person become beautiful through encounter with Christ and the healing community of His church. If we are to be like Jesus we can't opt out (Smith, 1988: 181-2).

REFERENCES:

Books, magazines and newspaper articles:

Andrain, C.F. and Apter, D. E. (1995). *Political Protest and Social Change: Analysing Politics*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Macmillan.

Bass, B.M. (1985). *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. New York: Free Press.

Bennis, W.G. and Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: the strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper and Row.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. (1959). *Life Together*. London: SCM Press.

Brown, Colin. (1968). *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*. London: Tyndale Press.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper and Row.

Campbell, R. (1977). The Character of Australian Religion. *Meanjin Quarterly* Vol.36: 178-189.

Chadwick, H. (1967). *The Early Church*, Ringwood, Vic: Penguin.

Clark, Manning. (1976) A Discovery of Australia. *Boyer Lectures*. Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Clark, Manning. (1981). *A History of Australia* . Vols 1-6, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Clark, Manning. (1969). *A Short History of Australia. Revised and Updated*. New York: Signet.

Clark, Manning. (1989). *The Puzzles of Childhood. His Early Life*. Ringwood, Vic: Penguin.

Collins, T. (1975). *Such is Life*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

Conger, J.A. (1989). *The charismatic leader. Behind the mystique of exceptional leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Conger, J.A. and Kanungo, R.N. (1998). *Charismatic Leadership in Organisations*. California: Sage Publications Inc.

Ellwood, R.S. and Partin, H.B. (1988). *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*. (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Eyerman, R., and Jamison, A. (1991). *Social Movements. A cognitive approach*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Gill, A. (1989). *Life on the Road*, Sydney: Lancer.

Gutierrez, G. (1974). *A Theology of Liberation*. London: SCM Press.

Habel, N. and Hart, P. (1983). *The Man with the Bushy Red Beard*. Sydney: Collins.

Hannaford, J. (1985). *Under a Southern Cross*. Adelaide: Tabor.

Harris, D., Hynd, D. and Millikan, D. (Eds.) (1982). *The Shape of Belief: Christianity in Australia Today*. Sydney: Lancer.

Harris, J. (1990). *One Blood*. Sydney: Albatross.

Hart, K. (Ed.) (1994). *Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse*. Melbourne: OUP.

Hill, B. (1985). Zealot in the cause of reason. *The Age*, March 2. Melbourne.

Horsely, R. A. (1994). *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Co.

Jasper, J. (1997). *The Art of Moral Protest*. London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kaldor, P. (1987). *Who Goes Where? Who Doesn't Care? Going to Church in Australia*. Homebush West NSW: Lancer.

Kaldor, P. and Kaldor, S. (1988). *Where the River Flows. Sharing the Gospel in a Changing Australia*. Homebush West NSW: Anzea.

Kaye, B. (1995). *Church Without Walls*. Melbourne: Harper Collins.

Kelly, T. (1988) Theology in an Australian Context. In Malone, P. (Ed.) *Discovering Australian Theology*. Sydney: St Paul.

Kiernan, B. (Ed.) (1976). *Henry Lawson*. St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press.

Lawrence, D.H. (1977). *Kangaroo*. Melbourne: Penguin.

Lennon, John (1971) Interview with Jan Wenner, *Rolling Stone*, January 1971. U.S.A.

Lewis, C.S. (1977) *The Problem of Pain*. Glasgow: Fount Paperbacks (first published 1940 by Geoffrey Bles).

Lines, T.A. (1992). *Functional Images of the Religious Educator*. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press.

- Malone, P. (Ed.) (1988). *Discovering an Australian Theology*. Sydney: St Paul.
- Marx, G.T. and McAdam, D. (1994). *Collective Behaviour and Social Movements. Process and Structure*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Melucci, A. (1996). *Challenging Codes. Collective action in the information age*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Millikan, D. (1981). *The Sunburnt Soul: Christianity in Search of an Australian Identity*. Sydney: Lancer.
- Moorman, John R.H. (1976). *Saint Francis of Assisi*. London: SPCK.
- Moreton, C. (1992) Riding with God's Squad to the outer fringes of society. *Church Times*. U.K. September 25, 1992. 8.
- Murray, L.A. (Ed.) (1991). *Anthology of Religious Poetry*. Melbourne: Collins Dove.
- Palmer, H. (1995). *The Enneagram in Love and Work*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Parker, P.L. (Ed.) (1980). *The Journal of John Wesley*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Rohr, R. and Ebert, A. (1991). *Discovering the Enneagram. An Ancient Tool for a New Spiritual Journey*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co.
- Rookmaaker, H.R. (1970). *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, Leicester, U.K: InterVarsity Press.
- Schaeffer, E. (1969). *L'Abri*. London: Norfolk Press.
- Schaeffer, F. (1973). *Pollution and the Death of Man: the Christian View of Ecology*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Smith, J. (1980). Mustering Australia's lost sheep. *On Being*. March, 1980. 4-8.

- Smith, J. (1982). *Understanding and Reaching Australians*. Melbourne: Scripture Union.
- Smith, J. (1982-4). *Letters*. copies e-mailed to author by John Smith 17-05-00.
- Smith, J. and Doney, M. (1987). *On the Side of the Angels*. Tring, U.K.: Lion.
- Smith, J. (1988). *Advance Australia Where?*. Sydney: Anzea.
- Smith, J. (1989a) Here's Life - Break it. *On Being*. February, 1989. 31.
- Smith, J. (1989b) Looking for a Good Book. *On Being*. April, 1989. 27.
- Smith, J. (1989c) A Righteous Rage. *On Being*. September, 1989. 20-24.
- Smith, J. with Gibson, E. (1992). *Cutting Edge*. Speldhurst, Kent: Monarch.
- Smith, J. (1996). *The Indigenous Church..* Paper, for Asbury Seminary, Kentucky.
- Smith, J. and Harvey, A. (1996) *Searching for Satisfaction: Rock's Search for Faith and Meaning*. Collingwood, Vic: Joint Board of Christian Education.
- Smith, J. (1998) Challenging the Minds of a New Generation. *Care and Communication Concern Newsletter*. May, 1998.
- Smith, J. (2001) How Fragile We Are. *Care and Communication Concern Newsletter*. December, 2001.
- Thompson, H. S. (1970). *Hell's Angels*. New York: Penguin Viking.
- Thornhill, J. (1992). *Making Australia: Exploring our National Conversation*. Sydney: Millennium.
- Theissen, G. (1978). *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

- Tichy, N. M., and Devanna, M. (1986). *The Transformational Leader*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Touraine, A. (1984). *Return of the Actor*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Turner, V. (1969) *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. Hawthorn, New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Wagner, C. P. (1998). *The New Apostolic Churches* Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Ward, R. (1989). *The Australian Legend*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. (1964). *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*: New York: Free Press.
- Weber, M. (1965). *The Sociology of Religion*. London: Methuen.
- Wellman, S. (1997) *John Wesley. Founder of the Methodist Church*. Ohio: Barbour and Company, Inc.
- White, P. (1969). *Voss*. Melbourne: Penguin.
- White, P. (1963). *The Tree of Man*. Melbourne: Penguin.
- Williams, R.M. with Ruhen, O. (1986) *Beneath Whose Hand*. Sydney: Macmillan.
- Wilson, B. (1983). *Can God Survive in Australia*. Sutherland NSW: Albatross.
- Wilson, B. (1975). *The Noble Savages: primitive origins of charisma and its contemporary survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Yukl, G.A. (1989). *Leadership in Organisations*. (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Yukl, G.A. (1994). *Leadership in Organisations*. (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,

Interviews and noted conversations:

- 1998a Interview with John Smith, Perth, January 13, 1998.
- 1998 Interview with Glenna Smith from Wilmore, Kentucky, August 27.
- 1998 Interview with the Rev. Ken Smith by telephone from Queensland, September 1
- 1998b Interview with John Smith by telephone from Wilmore, Kentucky, October 1.
- 2000a Interview with John Smith by telephone from Wilmore, Kentucky, May 17.
- 2000b Interview with John Smith by telephone from Wilmore, Kentucky, September 19.
- 2000 Interview with John U'Ren by telephone from Melbourne, September 22.
- 2001 Interview with John Smith by telephone from Melbourne, April 4.
- 2001 Conversation with Glenna Smith by telephone from Melbourne, August 27.
- 2001 Conversation with Mike Peele by telephone from Melbourne, August 29.
- 2001 Interview with Vic Heyward by telephone from Newman, September 3.
- 2001 Conversation with John Smith by telephone from Melbourne, October 29.
- 2001 Interview with Bruce 'Ironbark' Chambers by telephone from Melbourne, November 1.
- 2001 Interview with Eddie Pye by telephone from Melbourne, November 15.
- 2001 Conversation with Morris Stuart by telephone from Melbourne, November 20.

Addresses, recordings and broadcasts:

- Hannaford, J. (1986). *Address to Anglican Renewal Ministries Association Conference*. Melbourne, July 17.

Hirt, J. recorded preaching on *Radical Discipleship* at Happening '73 Conference, Melbourne, 1973

Smith, J. recorded on the *Tom Stokes Programme*, 3XY Melbourne, broadcast July 1983.

Smith, J. recorded on the *Tom Stokes Programme*, 3XY Melbourne, broadcast December 1985.

Smith, J. interviewed by Caroline Jones in *Making Sense of Life*, Vol. 2, ABC Radio National ISBN 0642 53043 2, originally broadcast 1987.

Smith, J. *Sex, Fidelity and Identity*, videotape recorded at Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival, U.K., 1988.

Smith, J. recorded at Uniting Church Conference on Evangelism, Sydney, 1997, three talks: *Authentically Reincarnating the Gospel Again and again* (1997a); *Evangelism in the Spirit of Wesley* (1997b); *A Bloke Called Jesus* (1997c) Care and Communication Concern Ltd. Audiotapes, 1997.

E-mailed personal communications:

In 2000 John Smith corresponded with me at some length by e-mail, sending copies of his letters and findings of his own research on the Jesus Movement.

APPENDIX

The character of Australian Spirituality

What is the character of spirituality in Australia? What were the influences behind its development, and in what ways has its development been unique? What were the major factors in Australian life that Smith needed to take into account in his mission to the country's 'gentiles'?

Cultural and Religious factors

Firstly there was the nation's profound **secularism**. Prof. Colin Williams, Dean of the School of Theology at Yale University, once described Australia as the most secularised of all Western countries (in Millikan, 1982: 39). Without the heavy weight of tradition carried by Europe, or the strength of the church in North America, secularisation progressed further in Australia. Whereas in the United States the church participated in the American struggle for national identity and in the process took on a profoundly American character, Australia was founded later in a less Christian era, and in circumstances where from earliest days Australians did not generally feel they belonged to or were valued by the church, or were able to contribute to its aspirations.

However, because Australians have never generally identified with the institutional church does not mean they have always rejected the central figure of the religion which was at the foundations of Anglo-Celtic society: Jesus of Nazareth. Formative Australian writers such as Joseph Furphy and Henry Lawson rejected ecclesiastical Christianity not on the basis of secular criticism, but on the basis that the institutional church failed to reflect Jesus as they perceived him: "the grave truth, the Light of the world, the God in man, the only God we can ever know ... by his own authority represented for all time by the poorest of the poor" (Furphy alias 'Tom Collins', 1975:107). Australians have traditionally believed in a this-worldly Jesus, incarnate in the compassionate battler who helps his mates.

Anthologies of Australian religious poetry show that historically there is a residually Christian interest running through Australia's literature. Poet Les Murray describes this interest as anti-clerical; mixed with stoicism, heroism and a belief in luck, but basically Christian in outlook (in Malone, 1988: 180). Lawson showed no understanding of or interest in the atonement of Christ or the concept of eternal life, but gave evidence here and there in his work of believing in Christ's incarnation as God made man, the champion of the humble and downtrodden. The author Dorothy Green notes Australian writers' preference for belief in the incarnation over the atonement (in Campbell, 1977: 184). It is a non-assertive Christianity that historian

Manning Clark, a convert to Roman Catholicism in his last days after a lifetime of agnosticism, once described as having “dropped to a whisper in the mind, and a shy hope in the heart” (in Malone, 1988: 181). Richard Campbell points to Australians having a very direct and unmediated relation to reality. We tend, he says, to lack an idealistic framework, confronting our situation in the present rather than in terms of the past or of an envisioned future. If we have looked for God, it is usually in terms of our present needs and situation (Campbell, 1977: 184).

Secondly, Australian culture is often perceived as **anti-intellectual**. In general intellectuals have not achieved the status they may enjoy elsewhere. This has been blamed on everything from our climate to our convict heritage. Whatever its causes, anti-intellectualism is reflected in the development of Australian spirituality, in that there has not been a substantial intellectual or theological tradition. Universities have not taken theology very seriously, and many church theological colleges have until fairly recently emphasised vocational training over intellectual inquiry. Our theologians have been on the whole either imported from abroad or trained abroad, resulting in the continuation of derivative traditions rather than a home-grown theology.

David Millikan draws attention to Australians’ impatience with abstract thought and our preference for practical solutions. He believes that those who would seek to interest others in the Christian gospel in Australia should be wary of relying on argumentation. It is better, he says, to rely on methods and means that can demonstrate to people meaning and purpose in living, and the Christian tradition’s stress on social justice and peace (Millikan, 1982: 36).

Thirdly, Australia’s image has long been one of an **egalitarian** nation. Although the nation is far from classless and its democracy far from complete, and though in recent decades the gap between rich and poor has steadily widened, Australians do generally treasure the myth of egalitarianism. It can be seen in the oft-noted tendency to ‘cut down tall poppies’ and the refusal to tolerate pretentiousness or pomposity. The historian Russel Ward wrote in the 1940s of the “legend” that Australians had developed about themselves, which holds that “Jack is not only as good as his master but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better, and he is a great knocker of eminent people unless they happen to be sporting heroes or distinguished by physical prowess” (Ward, 1989: 1,2). Lawson’s primary vision was that of a glorious mateship between Australian battlers.

It is not surprising therefore that many of the imported religious structures and traditions with their pomp, ceremony, hierarchies and titles, have alienated Australians from institutional religion. Episcopal leadership, for example, has been forced to take a much less pompous profile in Australia than in Europe. Yet even so, by retaining forms of address such as ‘Right’

or 'Most' Reverend, and regal ceremonial dress to go with the titles, it has failed to win the affection and trust of many Australians. Millikan comments that religious figures in Australia have to prove themselves "good blokes" before they can hope to be heard by a wide popular audience (Millikan, 1982:35). A figure such as the Rev. Ted Noffs, of Sydney's famous Wayside Chapel, was revered by the Australian public more than any cardinal or bishop because he identified with the needy of Kings Cross. A more orthodox "knockabout priest", Father John Brosnan, former chaplain to Pentridge prison, was probably known to more ordinary Australians through popular drama and folklore than any Catholic priest apart from Archbishop Mannix, who was loved and feared mostly because of his anti-establishment Irish politics and chauvinism.

From early on in their history Australians have cherished the notion that their country might develop into a society free of inherited status and privilege, where there might be what the poet Judith Wright called "a sense that here something new could be made, some kind of new relationship between men was mistily becoming possible" (in Malone, 1988: 205). This is reflected in fictional literature such as Xavier Herbert's novel *Poor Fellow My Country* (1972), where the theme is Australia's betrayal of this hope. In so far as Jesus of Nazareth remained outside the religious systems of his day (indeed was put to death because of them) and fraternised with ordinary people more than the rich and powerful, Australians have regarded him warmly as long as he is in some measure detached from institutional religion.

Most of the factors contributing to egalitarianism, going back to convict days, have also contributed to an **anti-authoritarianism** which became part of the Australian character, especially when it comes to religion. This can be detected as far back as the anti-clerical attitudes experienced by the Rev. Richard Johnson, the chaplain to the First Fleet, in 1788 (Clark, 1963: 23-5). Indeed historians such as Ward, Blainey and Clark, as well as fictional writers such as Henry Lawson and Tom Collins have demonstrated anti-clericalism among Australians at various social levels. The most popular religious figures are often those perceived by the people to have been rejected by the religious establishment. This has been best articulated by South Australian author John Hannaford:

Deep in the Australian's roots is a sense of having been rejected by the authorities and institutions. Therefore the people who will win a hearing are those seen to have suffered, like them, at the hands of the institutions. The only people breaking ground in evangelism are those who are seen as being apart from the bureaucratic authoritarian church mould. Thus someone like Ted Noffs is loved in proportion to how much he is disliked by the straight church (Hannaford, address, 1986).

Fifthly, **wowserism**, which can be defined as a negative form of puritanism or asceticism, has been a factor in the development of Australian spirituality through alienating generations of

Australians from organised religion, both Protestant and Catholic. The origins of wowserism probably owe something to the efforts of some convict chaplains to reclaim their congregations from widespread vice and depravity. Parole and privileges were given to prisoners who professed piety, but who also forswore drinking, gambling and other mild forms of vice. The connection between piety and puritanical behaviour was established, resulting in the various colonies developing some of the most restrictive liquor and gambling laws in the world.

David Millikan believes that the roots of wowserism may lie in the coincidence of Australian society's development with the ascendancy of middle-class Victorian mores in Britain, Victorian society being arguably one of the most hypocritically puritanical expressions of Christianity ever to have emerged (Millikan, 1982: 35). Add to this the ever increasing Irish Catholic population in the nineteenth century, with its strong ascetic component, and it is possible to discern that a young country trying to overcome its convict origins may have found wowserism a quickly accessible means of developing a sense of responsibility and self-restraint in its citizens. The Irish underclass may have sought respectability through submitting to the Victorian norms of the dominant English culture, he believes. There may be also a sense in which the capitalist system wanted to constrain the population for its own purposes, and found like the early convict chaplains of NSW that people could be persuaded to equate wowserism with Christianity. For many Christianity became identified with a series of prohibitions: thou shalt not drink or gamble, in the case of Protestants, or thou shalt not indulge in sexual pleasure, in the case of Catholics. In the words of poet Judith Wright: "No society can be as cruelly narrow and conventional as a small isolated community intent on respectability and the acquirement [sic] of wealth" (in Malone, 1988: 82).

The tragedy of wowserism is that, as Millikan points out, it represents an inessential element of Christianity, and one which does not commend the faith to today's Australian culture. In the proverbial words of London's Dean Inge, the church which marries the spirit of one age becomes a widow in the next. Christianity cannot convincingly be reduced to a system of ethics for the convenience of society's masters, and Australians tend to be dismissive of beliefs or doctrines which deny the joys and satisfactions of earthly life. This attitude is not surprising, given our climate and the natural advantages of our land, along with the wealth of resources at our disposal. In pioneer times, the work was hard and the opportunities for pleasure rare as the land was opened up. Somehow Australians felt they had earned the right to enjoy the good times when they came. But as a characteristic hedonism developed, its shadow remained a lurking wowserism. It can be argued that the more hedonistic the local culture (e.g. Sydney as compared with Melbourne) the more puritanical and polarised became the reaction in the local church. Eventually an accommodating balance was found: liquor and gambling laws were strict, but our national subculture became off-course betting, two-up games, and sly liquor. The result of all this is that Australians are not convinced by a 'pie in the sky when you die' version of Christianity, where reward is promised in heaven for pleasures forgone on earth. In Australia Christ's promise of more abundant life should be

demonstrated to be true for this world as well as for the next. Transcendence is only good news in Australian culture where it brings as a by-product a more authentic and satisfying life in the material present..

Sixthly, Christianity has invariably served a **conservative** role in Australia. Richard Campbell believes that the strange, frightening new land, so different from Europe, demanded that there be symbols of familiarity and security evident, and that the churches were under pressure from the start to provide these symbols (Campbell, 1977:182). While Christianity made no clear doctrinal contribution to Australians' understanding of their national identity (as it had for Americans in the U.S.), the churches did provide a stable value system which underpinned social and political life. They reminded Australians of the cultures from which the nation derived, in Manning Clark's terms Protestant, Catholic and Enlightenment thinking and culture in constant friction and competition with each other (Clark, 1963). This reminder tended to act as a restraint on radical thought until the 1960s and the social revolution that led to the Whitlam Government of 1972-5, by which time the churches had begun to lose their influence. In the 1970s the 'baby-boomer' generation threw off the Christian value system that it had received second hand from its forebears.

Australia's **regionality**, from its beginnings as a group of separate colonies settled in geographically distant places at different times, affected the development of its spirituality. An example of this is the frequently observed regionality of Australian Christianity. There are remarkable differences of emphasis between the various cities. Richard Campbell claims these distinctions run "right across the board" between, for example, the two largest cities of Sydney and Melbourne: Anglican, Roman Catholic, Baptist, and Presbyterian traditions each differ in style and theology between these cities (1977: 182). Religious life in Melbourne tended to be more urbane, more ecumenical, more catholic in its social vision, and more Tory in its conservatism. Sydney religion, on the other hand, was often more assertive, more wowserish, more sectarian, and arguably more reactionary. Campbell notes that the tendency towards fundamentalism seems to increase as one moves north into Queensland. Adelaide in turn was set up as a place for dissenters to settle in freedom from the established denominations, and so has had much more of a Protestant and free church emphasis than other cities, with the Lutheran and Uniting churches still holding a disproportionately high percentage of that state's Christians.

Why the differences? One can only speculate: Sydney had more of the convict influence, and its religion may have become more assertive and moralistic as a reaction. But then, Hobart had the second biggest convict influence, and its religious climate is more like Melbourne's. Perhaps the fact that the Hobart convict chaplains were more liberal than Sydney's is significant. Perhaps secular Sydney's more aggressive hedonism (as seen for example in the

Gay and Lesbian Mardi-Gras) to this day provokes a fiercer backlash from religious conservatism. It may not be surprising that the Rev. Fred Nile, the wowserish conservative social campaigner, is from Sydney. Melbourne, on the other hand, was settled later, prospered more quickly through the gold rush, and was climatically cooler and more like northern Europe. Moderation and discretion seemed to become part of the city's way. When it produced (unusually) an Archbishop as deeply conservative as George Pell, he was translated to Sydney eventually. Adelaide was never a convict settlement, and was always attractive to middle-class puritans: a 'city of churches'. The fact that the isolated city of Perth was settled later and prospered through gold could be a reason for its religious climate being more like that of Melbourne than that of Sydney.

Sectarian distrust between denominations was a feature of the history of Christianity in Australia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Church of England, accustomed to being the established church at 'home' in Britain, found itself competing for influence with a largely Irish Roman Catholic church which brought with it from Ireland much of the bitterness it felt for English Protestants. Mutual antipathy diverted the passion and energy of many of the most earnest Christians, as all the divisions and disputes of the old world were played out in an antipodean setting. According to John Thornhill:

Rival Christian groups developed distinctive ideologies which set their members in bitter confrontation with each other. All too often they lived on slogans and prejudice rather than finding a spirit of Christian fellowship in which they could acknowledge all they shared in common and a respectful relationship in which they could explore the nature of their differences in the light of the principles they shared (Thornhill, 1992: 184).

Richard Campbell shows how to churches that had been used to operating congregationally in the old world and to being considered as non-conformist sects, the new sectarianism was no great shock (Campbell, 1977: 181). But to the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Church of Scotland traditions, with their episcopal or presbyteral forms of government and their more catholic outlooks, the new arrangement was very difficult. It led to strange balances and compromises, such as an Anglican Diocese of Sydney which, though episcopalian in polity, was and remains thoroughly congregationalist and Calvinist in doctrine. In each of the colonies the denominations adjusted to sectarianism in different ways, which helped lead to the regionalism already described.

Sectarianism in Australian religious life influenced the broader social development of the nation. For example our education systems, heavily bureaucratised at State level, were in part the result of rivalry between Catholic and Protestant groups and the perceived need to keep a balance between the two. Manning Clark writes that it was "on the altar of varying religious truth as seen by Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian that secular education was sacrificed" in the earliest colonies, while in dissenting South Australia, by contrast, "the

numerical weakness of Anglicans and Catholics allowed religious education to be sacrificed on the altar of secular education," with the creation in 1851 of an exclusively secular board of education (Clark, 1963: 100). In recent decades the tide of sectarianism has receded with the growth of ecumenism and the breakdown of the old Irish/English dualism as a result of multiculturalism. Yet the heritage of sectarian attitudes lives on in some of our religious structures.

Evangelicalism has always been a major Christian tradition in Australia. In Manning Clark's thesis of the three major groups fighting for influence within developing Australia, the Protestant group equates with what most today would call evangelical: i.e. a low-church tradition where the Bible is taken as the main source of authority. The earliest prison chaplains and first clergy were nearly all evangelical Anglicans, following the biblical imperative to go into all the world to preach the gospel, no matter how unattractive personally or career-wise such a posting might be. Evangelical groups are found today in all mainstream Christian denominations bar Orthodox and Roman Catholic. They dominate Baptist and Pentecostal denominations, and make up a sizeable proportion of Anglican and Uniting Church members, especially in Sydney. Evangelicals range from liberal to ultra-conservative. In recent times the star of conservative evangelicalism has been rising, and most evangelical theological and bible colleges are increasingly conservative, to the growing exclusion of liberal teachers and teaching. This is part of the polarisation which Campbell calls a "pervasive theological mood", evident "right across the denominations" (Campbell, 1977:183). Assertive, dogmatic, and authoritarian are all terms applied to conservative evangelicalism with some degree of accuracy.

Demographic and social realities

In addition to these religious and cultural factors impinging on Australian spirituality, there are other demographic and social realities which influenced Australia's spiritual development. Isolation, the physical landscape, migration, aboriginality, leisure and affluence have each made an impact.

Non-indigenous Australians share a family history of having been, within the last 200 years, uprooted from an established culture elsewhere and transplanted to a vast, comparatively empty and unpredictable island continent, separated by distance from Europe, the Americas and much of Asia. For many Australians there is a vague sense of contingency about being here, of having been pushed out or cast off from the cultures to which we truly belonged. For much of Australia's history this sense was exacerbated by the vast distance in a sailing age

from our European roots, resulting in an existential and spiritual loneliness and isolation. Tony Kelly asks whether the exigencies of this isolation help to explain our materialism; our ironic contempt for protocol and pomposity which makes no sense when removed from its original context; the fatalism of many ordinary Australians; and our national tendency to sympathise with the underdog (Kelly, 1988: 57).

The geography of the island continent, which Henry Lawson once described as “the worst dried up and God-forsaken country” (in Thornhill, 1992: 7), has influenced the development of Australian spirituality. Whereas the hard work of American pioneers was rewarded with growth and prosperity as they moved inland from the East Coast and settled, too often the unforgiving inland of Australia rewarded hard work and self-sacrifice with ruin and loss due to drought or pestilence. While North America offered a fresh ‘canvas’ with similar seasons and soils to Europe into which the European consciousness might be planted afresh, in Australia the seasons were in reverse, the soils were mostly old and thin, and the climate could be treacherous. Somehow in Australia the Lord seemed more mysterious in his ways than he did in Europe or America: less predictable and more possessed of an ironic sense of humour. Australians learned to huddle around the southern seaboard, only venturing into the sweeping silence of the inland when the temptation for gold or vast acreages of semi-desert overcame the desire for culture and security.

Some have seen Australians’ awe of the vast interior as a metaphor for our fear of looking inward toward the realm of the spirit and of contemplation. Dare we expose ourselves to the vastness, the silence, and the menace of the interior, asks Roman Catholic theologian, Tony Kelly? (Kelly, 1988: 57). Others ask whether Australians have actually begun to worship the outback itself. Historian Geoffrey Blainey believes we learned to worship the mystical dead heart of the land, the “dun and arid landscape”, through painters and writers (in Thornhill, 1992: 156). Millikan asserts that the spirit of the Australian light and the “strange, grey-green” of our vegetation will inevitably “have its way with us” (1982: 44). Jim Stebbins sees the insularity and insecurity which the land forced on early Australians as having given rise to unionism and mateship as the setting for Australian spirituality rather than the ideals of liberty and equality which characterised America (in Millikan, 1982: 57). Certainly the sparse, sterile and desolate topology of much of the continent seems to have influenced the development of the Australian spirit, with its scepticism and irony. In the 1970s and 80s a sense of place was finding its way into the Australian consciousness. Harry Butler topped television ratings by taking a TV crew into the bush and inviting Australians to enter into his communion with wild places and animals. He told Millikan that he saw himself as a priest of the Australian landscape, “assuaging the guilt Australians feel for what they have done to the environment and also by showing them a new way of living with its mysteries” (Millikan, 1981: 67).

The importance of English and Irish migration in the development of Australian spirituality has been shown.. This century there have been in addition significant waves of immigration from Baltic states, southern Europe, Asia and latterly the Middle East. As a result Roman Catholics now constitute easily the largest group within Australian religion. In addition there are substantial numbers of Greek Orthodox and Muslims in Sydney and Melbourne. Buddhists, though relatively few in number, now represent Australia's fastest growing religion, partly through immigration and partly through growing interest among Westerners in Eastern spirituality. Most immigrants come to Australia with a strong sense of hope and idealism about the new country, seeking to break with difficult pasts to some extent. Each group brings a cultural contribution and perspective on religion, which in turn impact Australian spirituality. Already the old Anglo-Irish perspective on Australian religion, still relevant when histories such as Clark's were being written 20-30 years ago, is starting to seem strangely dated.

The last thirty years has also seen much change in the Australian understanding and appreciation of indigenous issues. The aboriginal people, until quite recently considered doomed to extinction through assimilation, is now increasingly understood, in the words of broadcaster Caroline Jones, as "the steady beating heart at the centre of our Australian identity" (in Thornhill, 1992: 207). From a population of 79,300 in 1961, Aborigines are now more than four times that number. Tony Kelly writes that aborigines now stand for "a special limit to our sense of humanity", in that their presence among us embodies in the Australian conscience a constant "challenge to the brutal greed that all but destroyed them" (Kelly, 1988:56). They also place White Australian Christianity constantly in the context of a national history of more than 30,000 years and an ancient creation-based spirituality focused in the ecology of the land. Christian missionaries have found work among the Australian aborigines harder-going than work virtually anywhere else in the world, e.g. Africa or South America. Christianity seems only to have "taken" in big numbers when spread through indigenous channels, such as in the Elcho Island and Yarrabah revivals of the 1970s and 1980s. Only in the last twenty years has a truly significant indigenous expression of Christianity and leadership been established both within and outside the mainstream denominations (Harris, 1990: 800-866).

Leisure and affluence were factors in the development of Australian spirituality. Donald Horne's assertion in the 1960s that Australia was "the lucky country" quickly became accepted as a truism. Never did a nation find itself more naturally blessed than Australia in the years following World War II, when Australians discovered they were the owners of vast mineral wealth, and granted themselves plenty of leisure time to enjoy the natural advantages of

climate and geography which they had been too busy or afraid to explore before. People from abroad are often amazed to hear that Australians receive not only four weeks' paid annual leave but regular long-service leave. The dream of the Lucky Country is beginning to fade now, with the growing awareness that Australia is going to have to become a clever country if it is to continue to prosper in the technology and information-focused world of the 21st century. Australians currently sense that their luck may not be going to last. But for the time being the leisure and comparative affluence remain, and Australians have more time and money to explore and enjoy their environment than most of the world's peoples. The number of four-wheel-drive vehicles bought by city people indicates a desire, even if it is rarely acted upon, to 'go bush' and explore the national myths. The legendary outback sites are now busy with touring campers, and an army of retired caravanners drives around Australia annually on pilgrimage to national parks and beauty spots. Our obsession with coastal holidays is if anything growing. It is interesting to reflect on how this worship of the outdoors influences the development of the Australian spirit. Creation becomes the primary contact point with God for many, and redemption is pursued through a reconnecting with the land and the sea. Australian Christians picture Jesus as an outdoor man, familiar with nature, and more likely to be found around a campfire than in a cathedral. The other leisure activity for which Australians have plenty of time and money is sport, albeit usually in a spectator capacity. Australian sporting occasions take on a rather religious function with the ritual and devotion they engender in their faithful supporters. On the other hand, perhaps the sporting fixation on winning and losing is indicative of arrested spiritual development rather than any deep spirituality.

In examining some of the factors which have influenced the development of various aspects of Australian Christian spirituality, it can be seen that there is an increasingly distinctive Australian expression of belief, and that Australians will not necessarily respond to expressions and methods of evangelism and Christian mission in the same way that Europeans or Americans will. Christianity is more likely to make progress in this country through authentically Australian voices and initiatives: communicators and carers who understand their nation's distinctive culture and history.